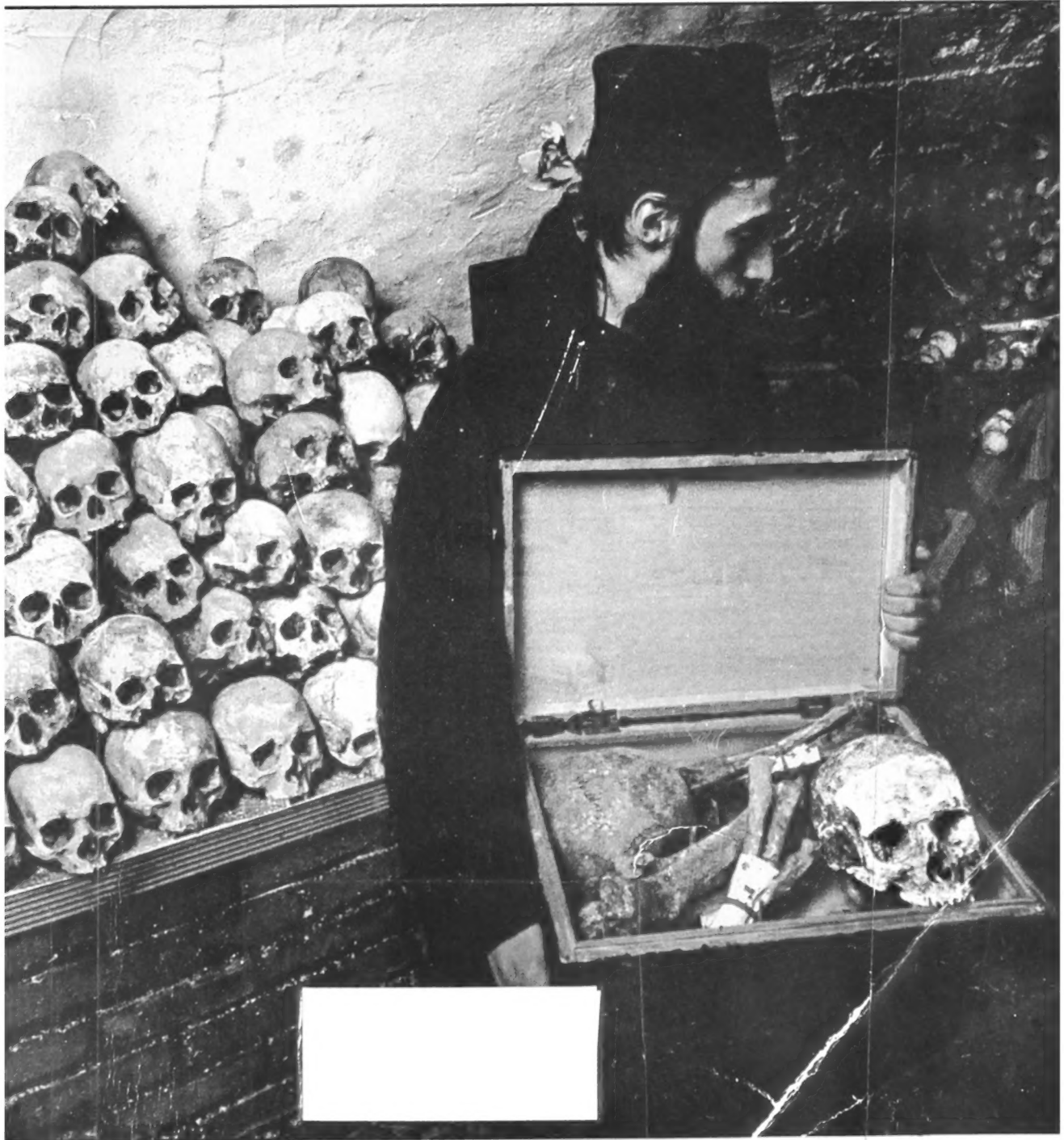
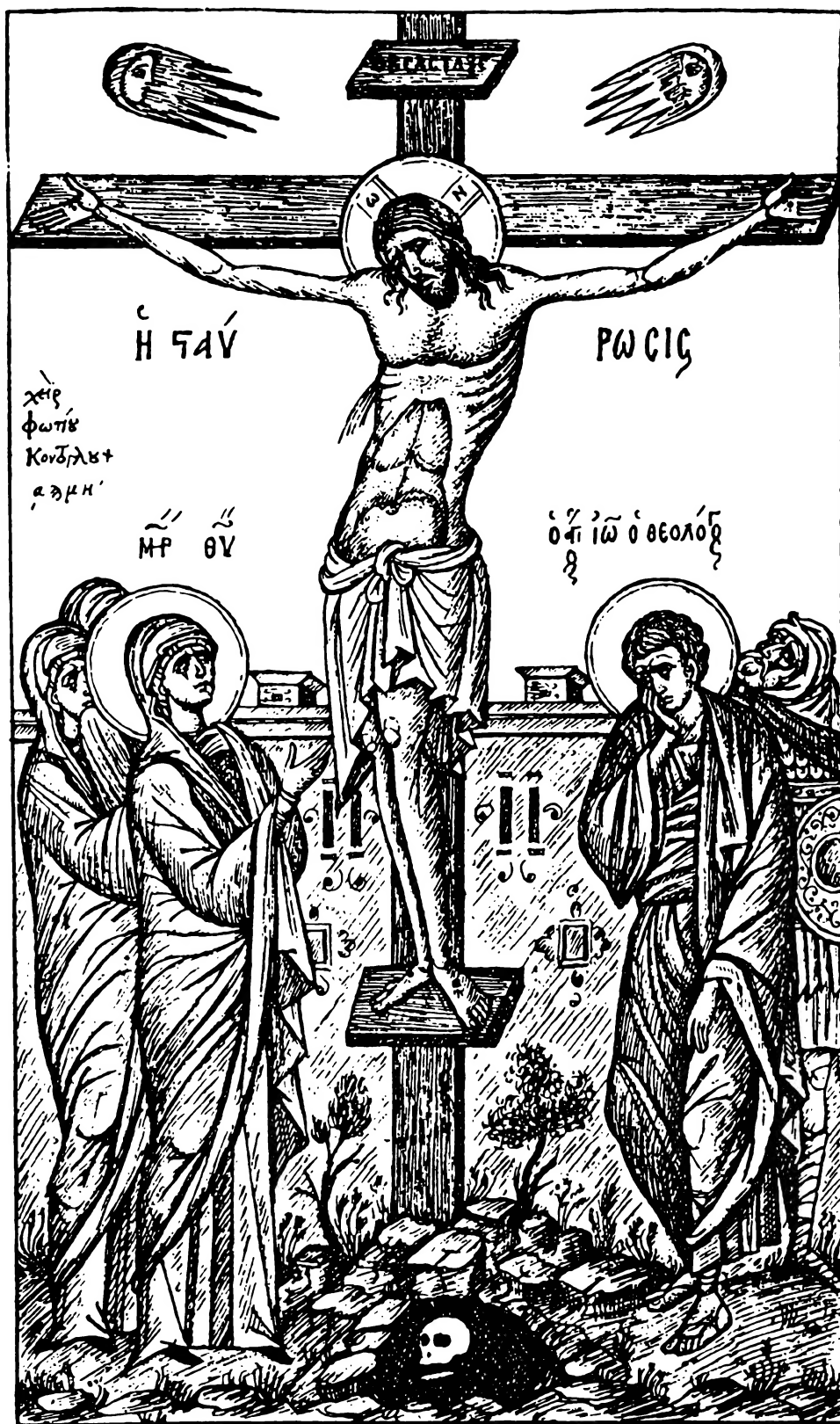


YOUTH OF THE APOCALYPSE



AND THE LAST TRUE REBELLION

YOUTH OF THE APOCALYPSE



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YOUTH OF THE APOCALYPSE

AND THE LAST TRUE REBELLION

By Monks John Marler and Andrew Wermuth



ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA BROTHERHOOD
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Front cover: A young monk of a monastery on Mount Athos, Greece, standing in the room where the bones of the dead monks are preserved until the day that they are resurrected. Photo courtesy of *National Geographic*.

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INTRODUCTION

FROM the mother's womb the newborn child cries; and these tear drops continue to fall even unto this generation of youth. Every tear of every child is a painful gesture of a universal confession of the fall of mankind from perfection—to corruption, suffering and death. This cry does not grow fainter as we grow older. On the contrary, in these times worthy of much lamentation the cry grows louder and is the only consolation of the youth of today.

This generation of youth, which could very well be the last generation, is shackled in despair to this cry because they see all too well that this broken world is coming to an end. And no one has told them the truth that in the apocalypse God will wipe every tear from their eyes. But they have been taught by violence that this eternal truth is “relative.”

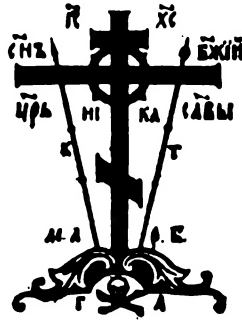
Alone, imprisoned in this world, we are brainwashed into believing that “there is no absolute truth,” and that there is “no answer to the question: Why?” After spending our childhood in such a cold prison, it's no wonder that in our youth we seek death. When there is no answer to the question “Why?” the only freedom seems to be suicide. When there is no truth in a world of falsehood; when there is no beauty in an ugly world; when there is no love in a world of violence and hate; when there is no God in a faithless world, it's no wonder that in every room, on every street, in every city, the weeping of the young can be heard. This is why youthful rebellion is born and justified.

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This breaking down of our world is due to one philosophy, one mission that has been victorious over man's freedom of thought since time began—Nihilism. It is the belief that “there is no truth.” It is like a heartless and gutless machine that presses on, giving birth to destruction, sorrow, pain and death. It chooses the young for its victims, for it is easy to scar the innocence of youth.

It is this machine that controls the spirit of these times and tells us that there is no answer to the question “Why?”—and therefore no reason to live at all. It is this machine of apostasy that has given birth to the youth of today. We are her children; we are the children of Nihilism; we are the youth of the apocalypse.

Now we are left with a generation that is dying off due to suicide—the Last Genocide. This Genocide can only be stopped by Truth. In order to embrace this Truth we must die to this world and be resurrected. This is the unshackling. This is the Last True Rebellion.



PART ONE
OUR ORIGIN



CHAPTER ONE

CHILDREN OF WAR

IN the beginning when there was peace, mankind was given the fearful and noble gift of free will. This perfect gift of life in moments brought about mankind's death. Within this gift of freedom there were two paths, two choices: good and evil. Mankind chose evil. As an angel falling from heaven, like lightning the whole of mankind fell into the abyss of corruption and death.

As children of war, this is our origin. We have come from thousands of years of sorrows—in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, in imprisonment and in death. With every step in mankind's path of evil, man has almost entirely burned the bridge to his creator. And, in place of the creator, man has enthroned his own imperfect mind and his machine.

With this machine, mankind has progressed into regression. The machine has proved dysfunctional and is now totally out of control, victimizing the youth of today. There is not one youth of the Apocalypse that has not been caught in the gears of Nihilism.

From war to war; from genocide to genocide; from holocaust to holocaust, our history can be summed up in one word: Death. From the first tribal wars to the first civil war; from the French Revolution to the Russian Revolution; from World War I to World War II; from Viet Nam to inner city gang wars, mankind has in freedom chosen this path. Mankind has chosen this war of evil against good.

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In this our history and origin, all these wars have come to a bloody end. But there is one war that man started in the beginning that continues unto this generation of youth. Every day, as our world steps away from truth, the darkness of this war closes in on us. It will continue to become darker until we admit that the war we despise and the hunger and suffering it produces is in the battlefield of our hearts.

This war is not nation against nation or man against man, but is simply: Man against God.

CHAPTER TWO

APOSTASY

GOD is dead.... God has been dying in the hearts of men since the world began. As time moves on, the state of mankind gets worse. A history course is actually a course in the slow death of God. In the school of Nihilism, it is a course in the destruction of the world. This is our origin as children of war. We were born under the waters of apostasy and were raised to drown, and our many tears are mixed with this ocean.

When Cain murdered his brother Abel, this rain of apostasy began to fall. When the Egyptian Pharaoh enslaved a chosen nation, this cry was heard from beneath this ocean. When the Greek philosopher Socrates voluntarily drank of the cup of death for the sake of truth, his words drown in this poisonous sea. When Christ was crucified, his tears and blood outweighed this ocean.

The Emperor of what was known in the first century as the “whole of civilization” went mad and began to rage against those who sought and loved truth. Emperor Nero began to play his harp as he watched his own people burn his capital of Rome at his command. Out on his balcony, watching the flames and listening to his people cry, he continued to play his harp. At this moment even the waters of apostasy were dried up and were changed into the flames of Nihilism. The frightening part about this history lesson is that this song of insanity has been playing until now, but it has gone from the beauty of the sound of a harp to total discord and distortion. Nero’s song was the beginning of the decline of western civilization.

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Since then the distortion was amplified by the great schism of 1054 when western civilization broke off from the east. Because of this discord, the western part of the world summoned the “dark ages,” the bloodshed of the Crusades, the Renaissance and its rebirth of paganism. Man’s imperfect mind began to replace the dying God. Science replaced metaphysics; this world overshadowed heaven, and the war grew colder.

We have survived centuries of holocaust and are barely alive. We have lived through the philosophies of Voltaire and Rousseau, and witnessed the bloodshed of their philosophy in revolution.³ We have seen the old order of morality and tradition slain by their “New Order.”⁴ We have experienced the ideas of Darwin and have embraced this faith by the masses; and have seen a glimpse of his ideas through the eyes of Karl Marx when, inspired by Darwin, he said, “The idea of God must be destroyed.” And Karl Marx’s son-in-law summed up the philosophy of the times when he said, “Darwin’s *Origin of Species* took away from God His role as creator in the organic world.”⁵ Lenin and Stalin were then given the keys to the “kingdom” of this world. Stalin was a student of theology when he heard Darwin’s popular writings. He then came to the logical conclusion that people are the result of an evolutionary process in which ruthless competition reigns.⁶ This is the modern reality of “survival of the fittest.” With this philosophy Stalin slaughtered over 40 million of his own people with the most cruel forms of torture ever known.

Just less than two thousand years after Nero played his song of destruction, the 20th century mad prophet and philosopher of Nihilism, Friedrich Nietzsche, struck up the same song, invoking the same flame to burn even hotter. It was he who pronounced God “D.O.A.” by his contempt of religion, and Christianity in particular. He’s the one who delivered the devastating blow to those who believed in God by saying, “God is dead.” Nietzsche wanted to look life square in the eye, with no God to obstruct his vision, and what he saw was agonizing to his mind.



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Nietzsche's writings and philosophy opened the gates of hell not only to the belief in the non-existence of truth, but with his ideas of Nihilism he gave the long-awaited justification of murder. At the beginning of the twentieth century a certain man drew inspiration from what he read in Nietzsche's philosophy and acted on his inspiration. This was Adolf Hitler.⁷ After reading about Nietzsche's philosophy that the inferior and the weak should be destroyed, Hitler personified the "superman" in his will for power and brought humanity to its knees. He, like Nero, burned his own people in his "Holocaust," and fought mercilessly to be the ruler of the world. Thus he introduced a "World War."

It was war that gave birth to the first "counter-cultures," the first acceptable rebellions on a popular scale, the first protests of the "Beat Generation" and the new style of music called "Jazz" and "Blues." They sang the songs that were the voice of a confused search for answers amidst a world of violence. They would detach themselves from the ways of the "modern" world that made no sense. But the cry in the progression of music got louder with the birth of "rebellious" music with a hard edge, called "Rock." Then the popular band called the Beatles made a statement that summed up the spirit of the times: "We're more popular than Jesus Christ."⁸

And then again war gave birth to another "counter-culture" that took it miles further than the "Beats," with even greater ideals, yet still not fully defined. This "counter-culture" was called the "Hippie movement." With "free love" they gave birth to the untraceable array of fashions and movements that comprise the end of the 20th century. The generation of youth today with the "counter-cultures" of punks, athletes, outcasts, skinheads, metalheads, mods, hippies, ghetto youth, gangsters, skaters, posers, and alternatives comprise this generation in search of identity: Generation X.

Through all these different movements there is one element that ties them all together. There is one common cry; there is one message that they all preach: Nihilism. As time moves on,

OUR ORIGIN

the confusion increases and the machine works harder and faster. The youth of today can't help but be burned and scarred for life by this machine. There is no one to tell us that the fire burns; thus we must learn the hard way and hope that we don't die in the process.

It's too easy to say that we, the children of the modern age are not affected by the history of Nihilism, yet we sit in ashes: an abandoned child in a wasteland of apostasy, lonely survivors of centuries of holocaust with no one to point in the direction of home, for all has been destroyed.

Nietzsche, the voice of Generation X, in a frightening way portrayed these godless times and defined the experience of the youth of today in his parable, "The Madman."

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the marketplace and cried incessantly, "I'm looking for God, I'm looking for God!" As many of those who did not believe in God were standing together there, he excited considerable laughter. "Why, did he get lost?" said one. "Did he lose his way like a child?" said another. "Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? Or emigrated?" Thus they yelled and laughed. The madman sprang into their midst and pierced them with his glances.

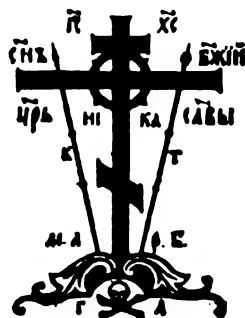
"Whither is God?" he cried. "I shall tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backwards, sideways, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the time? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's

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decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever will be born after us—for the sake of this deed, he will be part of a higher history than all history hitherto.”

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they too were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke and went out....

The youth of today also seem to have frantically searched for God, but in the innocence of their youth the world told them with laughter: “Why, did he get lost?” Thus, they threw their lantern to the ground and it too went out.



PART TWO
OUR DEATH



CHAPTER ONE

AFTERMATH

Now in darkness we feel the aftermath of the war. The body count increases daily, but even worse, the number of dead and branded souls is nearly endless. It seems that for many there is little chance of recovery.

Just as always, it is the children that become the worst victims of war. In this seemingly eternal fight of man against God, childhood innocence has not only been violated, but totally annihilated.

In the 1960's, *Time* magazine had as one of its cover stories, "God Is Dead." In the 1970's, it carried a cover story, "Marx Is Dead." This prompted a college cynic to say, "God is dead, Marx is dead, and I'm not feeling too well myself!"⁹

Nietzsche, knowing full well that God had died in the hearts of men, even stated that there would be two direct results in the 20th century. First, he said that the 20th century would become the bloodiest century in history, and second, that a universal madness would break out. He has been right on both accounts, and even fulfilled the second.

Insanity

The philosophy of the Aftermath and Apocalypse are summed up in one word: Nothing. From childhood we are told that we are nothing, we are educated in institutions that tell us that we came from nothing, and we are duped into believing

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that when we die we return to nothing. In short, there is nothing.

On this subject, the famous 19th-century Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky said, “If there is no belief in the immortality of the soul, then all is permissible.”¹⁰ If there is, in short, nothing, no reason to live, then the logical conclusion is insanity, for only in insanity does there seem to be a way out of this self-destructive world. The philosophy and lifestyle of the “sanity of insanity” has become mainstream. It prevails in the thought of modern youth. In a certain sense it has become the means of survival for the youth, in the “survival of the fittest.”

The following is an account of the insanity that prevails in this crazy world:

I once knew a young punk who was eighteen years old. He lived across the street from the inner city projects (ghettos) in Oakland. Every night he cried himself to sleep to the sound of gun shots. In the middle of the night he would sometimes get the urge to walk the streets of these war zones. He would dress dirty, contort his face and walk the deadly streets insanely screaming, drooling, and talking to himself. The people of the neighborhood would keep their distance from him. When he returned to his thrashed warehouse room, he felt an inner satisfaction at having succeeded in the “survival of the fittest.” Then, turning on some hard-core music that had overlying sounds of people screaming, he would cut himself with razor blades. His many angry tears would roll down his face and onto his chest, and would sting his wounds. He wanted so badly to die, but something prevented him from embracing death fully. I’m certain that he wasn’t truly insane, but he was playing with the fire of madness.

Leaving home at a young age, the youth are drawn to the inner city underground, where insanity is the only “norm.” And even if they live in a small town, they cultivate the inner city underground within their heart, seeking at least a taste of the popular rebellion of insanity.

CHAPTER TWO

INSANITY'S CHILDREN

JUST as Nihilism is the mother of insanity and madness, so insanity also has three children: sex, drugs, and violence. These children are just like their mother, in that they all are born from escapism.

The escapes and pleasures of sex, drugs, and violence seem to numb the misery of living in this dying world. Thus, all three of these children of insanity have been exalted and encouraged to even metaphysical degrees. Yet if they were “metaphysical” they would not cease when we die. Sex, drugs, and violence decompose with the dead, and yet with the living dead, they live on.

Sex

In a world barren of love and compassion, our cold-hearted society has sold the virginal purity of its daughters in its unquenchable lust for power and money.

If we look upon the many billboards along the highways, watch any series of TV commercials, or just glance across a magazine rack at the supermarket, it becomes quite clear what the number one product of the modern world is: sex. Sex not only sells itself, but everything else as well, from cigarettes and alcohol to dog food, and who is the object of this prostitution? Our mothers, sisters, and daughters.

The modern world has degraded the image of woman into a harlot. In so doing, man has become a whoremonger and the

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whole morality of the human race has plunged into the depths of sub-humanism. Once virginity was considered a virtue but in these twisted times, virginity is considered a sign of weakness. Why is it this way? How has humanity sunk into such a depraved state?

It is precisely because the image of the Divine has been abolished. In place of the Divine, mankind has begun to worship the flesh. In this deterioration, the meaning of love has been slandered. The truth of love receives its meaning from the perfect love revealed by God. When the notion of God is raped from the minds and hearts of mankind, true love is lost. What is left is a cloak under which man disguises his carnal lusts.

The depth of love is so foreign to these heartless times, that when on rare occasions it does occur, it is rejected. This is the masochism of love in the Nihilist world. In other words, we are so scarred and bruised from false love that it's hard to accept a deep and unconditional love when it is offered.

There is nothing that addresses the underlying loneliness of a generation raised in empty houses. Love has been undermined by the popular war that all too many young people in these times have been victimized by. This is the lonely war of divorce. It seems that most of us have been raised by no parents, or only one parent, or two parents with no answers.

Today's child is abused and abandoned. Whether by sexual molestation or child abuse, or just by lack of love, the child of the modern age grows up wounded. In his fight for survival, the child's wounds become scars and in time he learns to adjust to a loveless society. And without love, sex becomes violence.

Drugs

In a soulless world that preaches materialism and conformity, the young generation will go to any length in its search for an alternative world. One means of escape, other than sex, is drugs.

OUR DEATH

Whether it is the ghetto and street youth trying to raise his spirit above the stench of a world of violence, poverty, and a seemingly hopeless future; a young punk seeking refuge from the industrialized madness of the world; or a middle-class college student escaping the mundane life of intellectualism; the youth of today have no difficulty in finding the drug that opens the door to another world.

There are three stages in this chain: distraction, delusion, and death. From the time Timothy Leary began conducting experiments at Harvard on the use of LSD, and preaching the counter-culture message of “Turn on, tune in, and drop out,” masses of youth have sought not only to escape the bonds of an oppressive society through the use of drugs, but to “tune in” to the spiritual realm as well.

Leary preached the idea that through the use of LSD the mind is lifted out of the established thought-process into a new mode of thinking that produces a more perceptive consciousness. He taught that through this process the user will “transcend” his former self, which had been formed by a corrupt society, and so form a new “evolved” being.

The illusion of psychedelic drug use makes its first step in *distraction*. The once-mundane world appears magnified to the experimenter. At this point the user forgets the corruption of the world, and is contented with experiencing something new in life. *Delusion* strikes when the user begins to believe that the key to changing himself is a drug. From this point the downward spiral of dependence begins, in which the user slowly deteriorates into a psychically depressed state, and ends in a state of addiction. In this pit, the user becomes enslaved to habit and bodily addiction. He is then tyrannized by the drug until all vitality has been sapped from his being, or until *death*.

In the end, the fleeting glimpses of “higher consciousness” that Leary and the counter-culture generation of the sixties sought, proved to be a mirage. What began in a search for truth became a delusion of the masses. “Power to the people” proved to be an empty slogan as the love of many grew cold and most

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of the “counter-culture revolutionaries” bought their way back into the world of materialism. Finally, the ideals of this generation shifted from a seeking of truth to a pursuit of pleasure and self-satisfaction. As this movement passed away, it revealed itself as just another fashion in the ever-changing winds of the “spirit of the times.”

This fallen attempt of mankind to fulfill the innate desires of the human soul through the use of drugs exposes the condition of the soul of contemporary man: 1) man is dissatisfied with the state of the world; 2) emptiness within himself; 3) and has no means of raising his spirit.

Another escape that goes unrecognized in this world of pleasure is alcohol. In the contemporary culture of pleasure-seeking, alcohol is the numbing of the masses and the destruction of the unfortunate. Next to television, alcohol is the most common way of avoiding the question of truth.

In man’s continual flight to avoid the examination of his conscience, he will use any means of escape, including seeking refuge from reality through the use of alcohol. The empty man is temporarily filled with the euphoria of the senses that alcohol provides, and in this way is distracted from his emptiness.

Drinking as an escape and as a social pleasure is an “ideal” that has been magnified and glamorized; it is fashionable. People relate their favorite beer, wine, or liquor to their self-identity. A classic example is the “friendship” portrayed by alcohol advertising campaigns. Rootless contemporary man is drawn into its clutches and his empty soul becomes enslaved to the “spirit of the times.” And the “spirit of the times” is controlled by evil greed. That’s why sex is always used to sell alcohol. If not sex, then another false image is pushed, such as the idea that true friendship and “good times” are bound up with drinking. The images of advertising are nearly impossible to escape. Even if one is consciously aware that the System is trying to sell an illusion, our minds are still corrupted on a subliminal level.

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Being a social epidemic, alcohol is man's favorite pastime for avoiding the deeper questions in life—What is man's purpose in life? What lies beyond the grave? The driving lust of greed has pushed the Pagan-Roman ideal of pleasure-seeking into the arena of the mass-media. In 4th-century Rome, Augustine wrote, "All men are united by one purpose—temporal happiness on earth, and all they do is aimed at this goal, although in the endless variety of their struggles to attain it they pitch and toss like the waves of the sea."

There is a dark end to this epidemic: alcoholism. It is a beast that swallows up men, women, and children and is a demon that takes possession of one soul in order to kill whole families. In the grip of this beast the victims' personality is torn into a "Jekyll and Hyde." It protects itself with the defense of denial. It lashes out at those who confront it, and then, true to its nature, crawls back into its hole.

The damage of alcoholism is impossible to measure. How can the blood of the millions who have died from drunk-driving accidents be weighed? How can the tears of the children of alcoholism be counted?

Violence, child-abuse, divorce, and fatherless children are the results of alcoholism. What was a fancy became a habit and now is slavery. What began in laughter ends in tears.

It breaks the heart to see one who was free and full of life become ensnared in the death-trap of this demon. Slowly, someone whom you loved becomes a stranger. As the distance grows farther, the one whom we knew is no longer. The one we knew would not be like this. No, this is not a person but a phantom. Sooner or later we must ask ourselves: What was it that stole their soul?

The end of seeking spiritual fulfillment through the use of drugs is the death of the soul. The soul requires truth to live, but in these perilous times truth is hard to come by. The enemy of truth is selling the lie of drugs in its place. The youth of the modern age is a hungry generation that will eat whatever is given. The following is a heart-wrenching account of what can

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happen to the youth of the Nihilist generation if they are not given the truth.

I knew two brothers who I used to play soccer with when I was a kid. We lived in a small town that had a depressed economy. To get by, a lot of people dealt drugs, either on the side or as a livelihood. Most dealers owned at least a shotgun, and sometimes a handgun or two. The parents of these brothers dealt crank. Crank, a methamphetamine, is inexpensive to make and is a common drug among the youth because it is so cheap and extremely addictive.

One day the two brothers were high on crank and LSD at a recreation lake. They met a ranger who agreed to show them around the area surrounding the lake. At one point, the older brother took out a pipe and began to smoke pot. The ranger made him stop. With wounded pride, the brother's indignation became anger, and then turned to rage. Moments later, the ranger lay dead with a slit throat.

In haughty pride the brother bragged of his crime to someone who in turn carelessly gossiped about it in the line at the supermarket. The police came to the house and found the older brother, who at the time was high on a large dose of psychedelic mushrooms. Without much probing from the police, he willingly confessed every detail of the crime.

The fate of the younger brother was even grimmer. After his older brother had been sent to prison, he was at home taking inhuman amounts of crank. After being up for three days without sleep, he paced nervously around the house, waiting for the sun to come up. Then suddenly, for no apparent reason, in a fit of rage he grabbed his dad's shotgun, went into his parents' bedroom, shot his mother and father, and then went to where his six-month-old baby sister lay and killed her. Finally he put the barrel in his own mouth and pulled the trigger.

In this dreadful account of senseless violence, murder and suicide, three things are striking. The first is that it ends in a young man killing his mother and father, the people who gave him life and brought him into the world. Then he kills his sister,

OUR DEATH

an innocent baby. Finally he takes his own life. This is not just a isolated incident of homicide, but an increasingly common occurrence that testifies to the despairing youth's war against life itself. What was that fire that burned within him? What was the force that made him pull the trigger?

It is clear that under the influence of drugs, the user (experimenter or addict) enters a realm in which lie hidden factors that cannot be foreseen before taking the drug, nor understood during the drug experience. The delusion of drugs is a cunning one. At first the user is filled with a new knowledge and a promise of a new world. Yet what becomes of this knowledge? The answer is simply, nothing. Man's seeking through drugs is a dream in which he chases shadows. In the end it is all an illusion that passes away, leaving the seeker in desolation.

Violence

The third child of insanity is violence. The violence of modern man is expressed in two ways: impersonal violence and personal violence. Impersonal violence is the deep wickedness that has captivated the hearts of many; the lust for violently hurting people. Violence is not left to isolated incidents any more, but has stained all too many hands with blood. It seems there's nowhere to hide from it. Children killing parents, parents killing children, friends killing friends, children killing children. Our times are times of mindless violence, when people hurt and kill for the sake of killing alone.

And they say they don't understand why such violence reigns in our world. If they would listen to the killers themselves, they would find their answer. A recent murderer, when asked why he had killed so many people, said that he got inspired by reading pornography. And another said that he saw it in the movies, and thought he would "give it a try..." It used to be that children traded baseball cards; but now in these "advanced" times children are captivated by trading cards of murderers' mug shots.



A monk lamenting over dead humanity.

The other form of violence is personal violence which has hit it big on an extremely large scale. It doesn't just stop with the increasing interest in the fashion of tattoos, body piercing, or the body mutilations of the "modern primitive," but finds itself in the bloody mess of masochism.

Almost all the war children of Generation X have at least experienced this, if not been totally possessed by it. We've done violence unto ourselves not only physically but mentally. The dejection of living in the confusion of this nihilistic world brings us to our knees, and filled with anger we take out our aggressions on ourselves. Again we cry ourselves to sleep.

With the electric stimulation of media and by the influence of the modern arts, a new fashion has come into "vogue"—Insanity and her children: sex, drugs, and violence. And the accomplice to this homicide is fashion.

CHAPTER THREE:

TYRANNY OF FASHION

IN the ashes of the aftermath the war subconsciously continues. Fashion has become the only object for desire. Blinded by the darkness of vanity we have become slaves of fashions that come and go, that live and die depicting only one thing: the spiritual state of the youth: and paint a picture of the state of the soul. We have forgotten that fashions depict the spirit of the times which in turn is fashioned by the spirits under heaven.¹¹

In this post-modern age we think that we've escaped the tyranny of fashion by choosing the fashion of anarchy, but in fact fashion has grabbed us by the throat. The creativity and expression of the youth proclaim this with loud painful music and art of anguish. War always makes reality ugly.

In 1924 a Soviet artist said, "Art will attain the high point of its flowering only after the artist's imperfect hand has been replaced by the precise machine."¹² He would have been right had not his "machine" been made by these same "imperfect" artists: mankind.

The youth of today see that this artist's idea proved false. His "precise" machine has proved quite the opposite. Art has come to its end. Art at one time was a way to depict beauty, but now it has reached the extremes of deformity. The youth of today only depict the machine that gave them birth. In an ugly world, this is all we've been taught, and thus all we know.

But there is a whole other side to modern music and arts, the side where the grass is green with materialism: "artists"

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fueling the machine and becoming wealthy and famous in the process. One of the founders of “modern art,” Pablo Picasso, once summed this up in a simple phrase that has since been overlooked: “I’ve fooled them all, and made a lot of money.”

It is money that drives the machine of Nihilism. As contemporary artistic expression feeds gas to the machine, we buy the fuel. In this post-modern age music television (Mtv) serves this machine. It feeds its followers with sounds and images of the three incestual children of insanity: sex, drugs, and violence... for money, money, money....

The following is an account given by an alternative punk rock musician. It is his experience “behind the stage.”

The acts of violence and insanity performed on stage that were once used to give power to a “revolutionary statement” have now become a popular attraction, where people pay great amounts of money to the artist willing to sacrifice the most, physically, mentally, and otherwise. The momentum created by this spirit of needing to “out-do” the last show to remain famous in the spotlight has become so out of control that it actually possesses the artist. Underneath the enthusiasm and excitement of these wild acts, a hideous stench of death can be sensed—the stench of a decaying soul. The Black Sabbath album, *We Sold Our Souls for Rock and Roll*, has been realized to its full potential. My first encounter with this fact struck immense fear through my soul. There I stood, amidst thousands of people, watching a band that I had always looked to for inspiration and to set standards in my own music. At one point in the concert, a shoe flew out of the crowd onto the stage. Capturing the moment, the singer picked up the shoe, urinated into it, then drank. This repulsive act was received by the crowd with awe and approval, but in my heart it struck a different chord. I realized that the group was no longer enjoying themselves, but rather were just fitting the bill, performing miserable work to bring home the pay check at the end of the month. One could sense that they no longer even had a choice as to how they would act, but rather were enslaved to their image. This moved me

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because I saw myself running along the same path, and what I had always revered as my dreams, I then understood to be a living hell. I looked around me and saw that the audience was not made up of outcasts, punks, and misfits, but a general cross-section of modern youth, representing all major social groups, and no one saw, as I did, the hell behind the staged show, but only saw a group of men living out the modern ideal life.

The most unfortunate result of this process is that a chaotic and violent form of music has grown popular and been made available to the public on a large scale. These fashions are not only requested by the youth, but required by popular demand.

One manifestation of this is the popular form of dancing called “slam dancing,” where a swarming “pit” of people throw themselves and others, as Nietzsche said, “backwards, sideways, forwards, and in all directions. Is there any up or down left?” Violently acting out all aggressions, they finish the sentence, “Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?”¹³

This kind of dancing, which was once held as a distinguishing characteristic which demonstrated the “insanity” of punk, has now found its way into high school prep-rallies.

Through Mtv (music television), this movement is perpetuated on an even larger scale, where grotesque visual images are mixed with music and then offered to the youth as soon as they are old enough to “start the machine.” How is a child supposed to interpret such visual depictions: a forest of trees clad with fetuses hanging from the branches; or the very musicians’ bodies hanging lifeless from meat hooks? The music that has been the backdrop to our life has created and accustomed us to hell on earth. Beauty has been crucified.

Beauty Deformed

The famous author Fyodor Dostoyevsky said: “Beauty will save the world.” Progress with its machines has made the world

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regress to a place where there is no beauty. If beauty is undermined, what will save the world?

From childhood we are taught that things detestable are attractive, and therefore the image of true beauty is deformed. Since there is no distinction between what is beautiful and what is ugly, we are left with chaos. We are told that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” but if this were true the world would never have a chance to be saved, for man’s interpretation of beauty can be deadly. The famous poet Keats said: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty.” But truth could never be in the eye of the beholder.

Historians say that “religion was the cradle of art.” This notion reveals to us man’s first impetus for art: to raise his spirit above the earth through an earthly mode. In this way, art can express the different states of man’s spirit: love, joy, suffering, and compassion; or can even exalt the spirit to perceive the divine. But the spirit of the modern age has killed the soul of man. Contemporary man is so desensitized that he cannot even feel that he has a soul. This soullessness is what has produced modern society and its art.

In the past, mankind had a way to depict and express true beauty, and to express man’s longing for a state of higher truth and raise him to this place, which is beauty. This was done through the arts, literature, painting, and music.

First we must ask ourselves: what is the substance of art? Yesterday no one would have hesitated to respond: beauty. Today they say that beauty is relative. They say that a classical sense of beauty is a result of conformity to an oppressive moral standard and thus “politically incorrect.” But now that deformity is in vogue, who is the conformist?

The arts of the modern world have confused and deformed souls, and no longer elevate them to a higher state. They paint the picture, and scream the song of the youth’s despair and anger. While destruction paints its picture, the song plays on and life becomes absurd.



An image of beauty deformed, by Salvador Dali.

Beyond the Absurd

The modern age is absurd. That which used to be ugly is now considered beautiful; that which was wrong is now considered right; people no longer live to create life but to destroy it. Now that God is dead life is beyond absurd.

The incoherent state of the modern age is best illustrated by contemporary art. There has even been founded a new form of artistic expression created directly out of man's compulsion to express the absurd: avant garde.

Absurdity approached its peak when a certain avant garde artist revealed his "masterpiece" to an absurd world. The "artist" stood on stage with one other man, the two facing each other. The other man then pulled out a gun and shot the "artist" in the arm. The audience roared with applause. Critics raved: "Brilliant!" "The man is a genius" He became rich through his "masterpiece", a book was written, and he became a champion of "the absurd."

Absurdism has reached its end when the murderer becomes the hero. A good example of this is in a modern movie about a murderer who kills and eats his victims. He is portrayed as a kind-hearted, intelligent man who appears to have no blood on his hands, but in fact desires nothing but to satisfy his craving for human flesh.

In one scene he guts a security guard, hangs him on the wall of his prison cell like a crucified angel, and, with blood still in the corners of his mouth, listens to classical music.

At the end of the movie he is the hero, he is the saint of Nihilism, and the people praised this as "psychologically profound." But it never gave an answer, just depicted the reality of the twistedness of today, taking no prisoners. As I sat there in the dark while the screen went black, the applause grew even louder, and I heard someone say behind my left shoulder, "He's my idol."

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The spirit of these times is absurd. Man is surrounded by a world of chaos and has no unity within himself. Perhaps the art critics are right: the absurdist is profound in depicting the spirit of the times. And yet, an art critic should be gauging his or her observations in regard to what is art, not what is the spirit of the times. For as the seasons change, so do the times. If we observe the times, then we critique fashion and not art. But is that not what art has become in the modern age? Yes, art is fashion. If this is the case, what is moving the fashion of absurdity in the world and in man's expression of art?

What has produced this "spirit of the times" that has killed man's soul? What is that force that replaced beauty in art with fashion? The answer is none other than Nihilism, that enemy of truth. When truth died in man's heart, Nihilism masked itself in the hoax of fashion and crept into man's empty soul. In the absence of truth, the spirit of Nihilism grew strong. In this state, man and everything he created became absurd. By forgetting truth, man has lost his freedom. One question remains: how can man free himself from the tyranny of fashion?

Apathy

When insanity is found to be "just another brick in the wall" and this wall topples down, and when pleasure can no longer be found in sex, drugs, and violence, a sorry state takes captive the heart and soul: apathy. Apathy is the willful refusal to reach for higher truths.

We cannot rely any longer on the last resort of "religion" for the desired "way out" of the path to destruction. We've been lied to far too many times, and we've been hurt. We've been beat to death by all the different beliefs, and are no longer interested in "organized" religion, for we now see that any "organized" religion is just another earthly institution that ends up seeking power. And in seeking power, many lives have been devastated. We've seen them look down on us and heard

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them preach to us that if we don't join their organization we will surely burn in hell.

We've heard their message of hypocrisy and are no longer interested. Some preach poverty to live in luxury and wealth at others' expense; some say they practice peace, but they smuggle machine guns; some believe in conversion by force while apostates are to be killed.

The many different religions have damaged us and left us in total apathy, and now we are left to say: "I'm sorry, my karma has run over your dogma!" So we no longer lift our heads when another circus of "religion" passes through our town, but continue to stay downcast. As all the different "faiths" proclaim that they are the only way and that the rest of the world is doomed, we now see more clearly; that all the different "religions" possess some shreds of truth to greater or lesser degrees.... Sitting in the waiting room, we wonder if truth has survived such a war.

The modern man of apathy has no means of communing with his Creator. He does not even want to hear the word "God." He is annoyed at the very mention of the word. When he hears it, all he can think of is TV evangelists with Cadillacs; and so he turns the channel. At least the TV will take his mind off the hollow feeling within. And even if he cannot find a channel with a program that stimulates his mind, he can still turn the channel. And if he finds yet another mindless show, he can turn the channel again. No one program can satisfy the youthful mind any more; rather, it is the anticipation of the fleeting moment of hope experienced between channels that has drawn him back to the set.

The effect of an artificially alluring image which actually mesmerizes and dulls the senses shapes modern man, and turns him into an empty receiver for the thoughts of "breaking free." We even sense that the TV projects the flatness of the world's values and corrupts the mind, and we despise the machine. Yet we continue to turn the channels.

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A man associated with successful advertising for many years, Jerry Mander, made a personal study of the effects of television. He said that the way a television image is formed is visual, in the “mind’s eye”; an actual camera image will not show it. The purpose is to implant the image directly in the memory so that it becomes indistinguishable from a real-life experience.¹⁴ How then do you distinguish truth from falsehood, and illusion from a real event? The television image is deliberately made to show “action,” “conflict,” “excitement,” and the appearance of life. Such glamorous images color the imagination and ideals especially of the young and impressionable. Those who desire to live in a true perception of life are stimulated by the TV machine to live otherwise, and in a certain sense are brainwashed by the defilement of the image of nihilism.

What about those who desire to willfully reach for higher truths? What will become of them in the end? If they survive the boredom of the “modern age”; and reject the “saints” of nihilism; and fight against the “bliss of ignorance”, there’s one more obstacle that must be overcome: Apathy leads to sympathy.... Sympathy for the devil.

The Occult

Since “God is dead” and is “bleeding to death under our knives,” someone must take His place as “master.” In a world void of mystical experience, some seek a door to another world, but not just through insanities—through direct contact. The world of the occult seems to possess a key to this door. For some the key is sex, drugs, or violence; but for some, in Satanism. After sifting through the ashes of “wannabe” occult fashions, we will see two broad categories of the occult: “soft-core” and “hard-core.”

Soft-core occult is basically the fashionable rebirth of paganism—nature worship, and exploration of the little-known natural powers of the soul, such as mental telepathy,

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reading auras, tarot, levitation, etc.... People are drawn to it not out of a conscious rebellion against God, but out of curiosity and vanity (the desire to acquire special powers or insight that would raise them above the “common masses”).

Hard-core occult is deliberate Satan-worship. Such people will actually call themselves Satanists. This is a conscious rebellion against God, for one cannot believe in Satan without believing in God. And not just any God, but specifically, the “Christian” God. It is the belief that God is the “tyrant” of the universe, and that Satan is man’s best friend who wants to give him freedom and make him happy by helping him get all he wants in this world. Here’s where Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche’s words ring true unto animal and human sacrifice. When a man or a woman is initiated into the seventh degree of Satanism he swears that his principle will be, “Nothing is true, and everything is permissible.”¹⁵ In these times of annihilation beyond desolation when destruction is the “norm” it is obvious who the “master” is; since Satan cannot create but only destroy.

The main problem with both kinds of the occult as a “faith” is that it has no understanding of what lies behind the curtain of this world. In ignorance it dabbles in the other world without any distinctions between the evil and good powers in the other world. The result of this ignorance is that the person “playing” in metaphysics as a rule ends up tapping into the evil side, even if that was not his original intent.

The following is an account of a young punk who grew up in a shattered home and found an escape in the occult:

I lived in my own fantasies and realities that I had created. I went from a “normal” young kid to a punk with a blue mohawk and combat boots. Because of my individuality I was shot, stabbed and beaten. One day a friend of mine invited me to a party of sorts. This party consisted of some of my friends from school and two older ladies. It was described to me as friends sitting around and talking, drinking soda, eating chips and playing games.

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The two older women were witches and the party was a gathering of a coven. I was then initiated into the practice of Wicca. If you don't know, Wicca is an ancient feminine-dominated form of druidical magic. That is why I was called a witch and not a warlock. I progressed rather rapidly and became a practicing witch. My mind sank into a strange sort of delirium and dementia. It was obvious to me that insanity was the ultimate experience. If you die, it's all over. If you go insane, you pass through death without dying. This was my philosophy. I strove hard for it day and night. My practice of witchcraft took me to many new places, mostly through astral travel. It was a natural expansion of my fantasy world. I was all-powerful and everything looked up to me in this world that I had created. The feeling of power is what keeps you going in witchcraft. In the real world I was nothing, in witchcraft I was something. I felt invincible. I was wrong.

One night I woke up due to a rather strong call of my bladder. This was one of those times when you lie in bed and switch from looking at the clock and then looking at the door, trying to decide if you can make it until the morning without wetting the bed. I decided to get up and go to the bathroom. I then realized that my entire body was paralyzed from the neck down. In Wicca there are no drugs or alcohol. If you would be found using these things you would be expelled from the coven. I knew that I had nothing in my system that could cause this. The only explanation I could come at was something spiritual was attacking me. I left my body and suspended myself above it. I then went into shock. Sitting all around me and holding me down were about fifteen demons laughing hysterically. One turned and looked at me and spoke. It said I was the biggest ***** idiot it had met in a long time. It said that I was taught what was right but went the wrong way, and now I was so deep into it I was going to hell and there was no way out. He then proceeded to make a deal with me. Two of them came to my astral body and turned me around. When I was turned around I found myself in hell. There is no way to describe what I saw, felt, and smelled. I will never forget it. The faces.



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They returned me to my room and gave me the ultimatum. I could kill myself and become like them and torment instead of being tormented, or die and go to hell anyway. I chose suicide. Just before they let me return to my body, I said under my breath, "Jesus, if you're there, help." There was a great flash of light and they were gone. I sat up and began to curse God. Why did he let me go through these things? I cursed him for about an hour while I cleaned up the vomit my body expelled during the experience. It was then I, for the first time, heard the voice of God. He said only one simple phrase that stopped me in my tracks. "All I wanted you to do was ask."¹⁶

CHAPTER FOUR

NOTHING SHOCKING

WE have embraced hell; we have followed the commandments of the “spirit of the times” and have found ourselves in a Catch 22. We’ve been educated on sex, drugs, and violence by the stimulation of media; we’ve passed the course of Nihilism and graduated in the school of destruction.

The Greek philosopher of antiquity, Aristotle, said, “School and education is for teaching the young what they should like and dislike.” Modern education has taught us that we should dislike the reality of a God. It has taught us that we should succeed in this world and thus fall away from heaven. It has made Nietzsche’s philosophy of suicidal insanity “mandatory reading”¹⁷ giving justification to murder God. It has taught us ruthless competition and has given us all numbers instead of names.

The irony is that when we live up to what we’ve been taught in the institutions of this world, we are again institutionalized and put either in a padded room or in a room with bars, and again we are given a number.

In this school of destruction one of the teachers goes by the name of “revolution.” He claimed to be against the “system,” but in practice he is the system’s greatest benefactor. This is the contemporary manifesto of deception: our supposed rebellion against the “system” has itself turned into the worst system.

New World Order

Revolution is in the blood stream of modern man, beating from the heart with increasing idiorhythm. The goal of revolution is, as Nietzsche explained, “completely new conditions of existence.”¹⁸ The outcome of the Nihilist and antitheistic annihilation of the old order is the conception of a “New Age”—“new” in an absolute and not a relative sense. This is where Hitler set the fire of his holocaust in search of the “new world order” that burned down even his own prison. Thus, in short, the Nihilist revolution, aimed at abolishing authority and order, is ushering in a new institution: the New World Order.

The “New World Order” which the “system” is developing into is one that so far the youth have rejected. But if we have a true rejection of the “New Order,” the “Heaven on earth,” we must also reject Nihilism. Even though the institutions that have deprived us of God have taught us quite the opposite.

The institution of Nihilism of Destruction that has paved the way, through revolution, to the “new order” has given life to what could be the final unleashing of terror: the spirit of Antichrist.

Again Nietzsche picked up the harp and played his song, proclaiming himself “Antichrist.” Not too many years later the popular punk band the “Sex Pistols,” the voice of the youth, smashed Nero’s harp and cranked up the distortion, singing along with Nietzsche, “I am an Anarchist. I am an anarchist. I don’t know what I want, but I know how to get it. I wanna destroy....”

In the history of the world there have been many that have had the face of Antichrist, one who seeks power with blood to bring people down on their knees. From Nero to Hitler the world has never been void of the threat of a world order. Hitler took Nietzsche’s works as a philosophical guide that provoked the bloodiest, most nauseous war in history driving an atheistic

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world view to its conclusion. Hitler said: "I freed Germany from the stupid and degrading lies of conscience and morality... We will train young people before whom the world will tremble. I want young people capable of violence—imperious, relentless and cruel."

But pointing the finger at past blood and gore performed by antichrists is not our end. We will reveal the core of the terror that is found not in the Nero, Napoleon, Hitler, Lenin or Stalin but in the spirit of the age which is much more frightening than any of these. The spirit of this age and these times is Antichrist.

What is the "New Order" if not the throne of Antichrist, the satanic imitation and inversion of the kingdom of God? The most extreme denier, the most disillusioned of men, can only exist if he cling to one illusion in which he can place all his hope. He who cannot believe in Christ must and will believe in Antichrist.

But if Nihilism has its historical end in the reign of Antichrist, it has its ultimate and spiritual end beyond even that final Satanic manifestation; and in this end, which is hell, Nihilism meets its final defeat.¹⁹

*Little children, it is the last time: as you have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; by this know that it is the last times.*²⁰

The Last Genocide

We have come to the end of our rope. In these violent times there seems to be no reason to continue life; no reason to wake up even tomorrow to face another day. The youth of today have come to the conclusion that the only hand left to wipe the tears from their eyes is the hand of suicide.

Many, while perhaps admitting the truth of some of our observations, would condemn them as a whole for being "one-sided." In all justice, then, we must examine the other side, the "positive" view.



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And indeed it cannot be questioned that, beside the current of despair, disillusionment, and subhumanity that we have described as emerging from this era of Nihilism, there has been a parallel current of optimism and idealism. These are young people both idealistic and practical, ready and anxious to cope with the difficult problems of today and to spread this undefined ideal. Scientific research discovering the “mysteries” of the universe; pacifists and non-violent idealists crusading in the cause of peace, brotherhood, world-unity, and the overcoming of age-old hatreds; young artists “angry” for the cause of justice and equality and spreading, as best they can in this sorry world, a new message of joy and creativity; and the great numbers of more ordinary young people who are enthusiastic to be alive in these “exciting” times, sincere, well-meaning, looking with confidence and optimism to the future, to a world that may at least know happiness instead of misery, while the older generation is much too scared by this era of Nihilism to share fully the high hopes of the youth of today.

But the question must be asked: If the world is becoming a better place, why are so many people killing themselves? Suicide is reaching proportions unheard-of in the history of the world.

Suicide has become popularized and idealized, inspiring the young to kill themselves not only with guns, razor blades and poison, but by the slow suicide of drug use. We say of ourselves, “We are comfortably numb.” This statement says quite a lot about the state of our generation. To desire to be numb is to state that there is pain, for without pain, there is no need to find comfort in being numb. We convince ourselves that we need to be numb not only once in a while, but all the time, for the pain inflicted by this corrupt world is continual. So through peer pressure in a destruction-bound world where there seems to be no physicians (of the soul) we hold the needle in our own hand and kill our own pain. The infection of suicide then sets in.

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This infection is no longer isolated to the minority, but is rapidly spreading to the majority, for suicidal tendencies has victimized almost all of the young of today. Most of us have had a friend commit suicide; but even more shocking, the majority of the youth have attempted suicide at least once.

For many young people, suicide has become an ideal to live for, and for many to die for. Suicide not only sets the stage for the younger generation, but has also pulled the curtain entirely over their eyes.

It was only a few years back that I remember all my friends waiting for an underground popular punk rock figure to get out of prison and return to the stage. His name was G. G. Allen, and he was in prison for setting a girl on fire at one of his shows. People were anxiously awaiting his release so as to see him fulfill his proposed last concert. He had been stating that at one of his shows he was going to commit suicide on stage. This drew crowds of young people to his concerts. In 1994 he indirectly fulfilled his proposal. After finishing a concert soon after being released from prison, he overdosed backstage and died. He was to the utmost extreme a Nihilist of the nihilism beyond destruction, for at his concerts he would mutilate himself in ways indescribable, satisfying the curious desires of his fans. But now he is dead, another young victim of the war.

Apocalypse

The machine of nihilism has brought us to our knees. The spirit of the times is dark, and the future seems unimaginable. The most perverse thoughts have become reality and the most ruthless deaths imaginable have been executed. Things can't get much worse.

As we sit in a comfortable room or walk through an open field under a blue sky, the thought that "things can't get much worse," is arguable. Yet this statement rings true with the thousands that are dying under the grip of the modern machine.

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Once while I was at an underground punk rock alternative concert, the thought came to me: things can't get much worse. I thought this as the lead singer of the performing band began to cut himself up with a razor blade, invoking the blood to flow. The music was as loud as music can get without making one totally deaf in an instant. The room was dark and filled with smoke, with the words of modern prophets written in graffiti on the walls. The words from the mouth of the singer as he slashed himself were, "Scarred for life." He screamed it from the depths of his gut. The music sounded like factory machinery. Still reveling in the music and sounds I liked so much, I still encountered the thought: "things can't get much worse."

Things are beyond the point of no return. We've gone too far, and there is no turning back. There is one simple point that illustrates this: nothing is shocking anymore.

We are no longer shocked when we go to the theater to see a movie about a cannibalistic murder who is the hero of the show. We tell ourselves that it's only harmless "entertainment." This universal lie has slaughtered thousands by the hands of murderers who were inspired by the same "entertainment."

We are no longer shocked when we hear of the many bloody wars that destroy countless lives. We are no longer shocked when we gaze at the news and see how a man murders a child; and we are no longer shocked when we hear of the death of God....

Nothing is shocking and so we are left to ask one question: "What shall be the sign of the end of the world?" And as we ask this question our heart skips a beat and we are told:

You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you are not troubled, for all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginnings of sorrows.



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Then they shall hand you over to be tortured and shall put you to death, and you shall be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many shall grow cold. But the one that endures unto the end shall be saved.

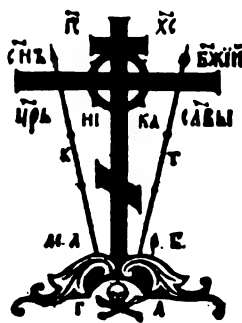
When you shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet, stand in a holy place. Then there shall be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been shortened, no one would be saved. For wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather.

Immediately after the suffering of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken. Then there shall be weeping and grinding of teeth.²¹

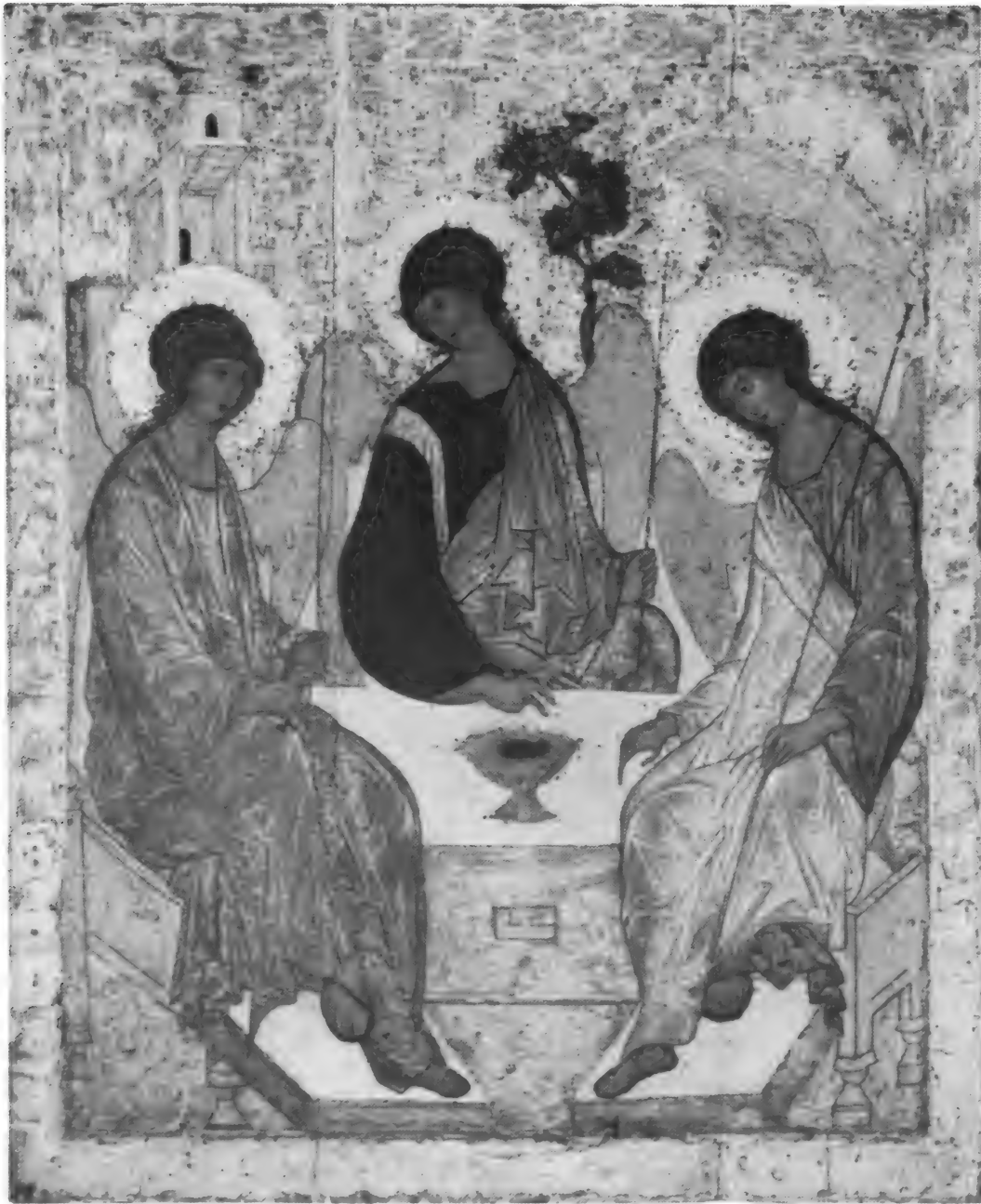
This is the apocalypse. This generation is the Nihil generation; Generation X; the suicide generation. From the moment we come from the warm embrace of the mother's womb, we are misfits and outcasts in a world that tells us there is no meaning to life, no answer to the question "Why?" We originated from Nothing and we are returning to Nothing. The common philosophy is summed up: You're born, you live, you die....

The system that knows us as only numbers tells us that our days are numbered. In this brainwashing our minds have not been cleansed but actually defiled, only leaving us alone and isolated to cry ourselves to sleep as the machine of Nihilism presses on, giving birth to destruction. Nihilism in our time has become so widespread and pervasive, has entered so thoroughly and deeply into the minds and hearts of all living today, that there is no longer any "front" on which it may be fought.

The war rages on as the youth of today cry mournfully for a childhood without violation. In this war of man against God, it is no wonder that suicide is the last genocide.



PART THREE
OUR
RESURRECTION



The appearance of God in Trinity to humanity.

CHAPTER ONE

TRUTH

WE have come through fire and water in our rebellion against the world. We have fought against its wicked ways through our music, art, and philosophy of life. We have been thrown into darkness and we stand now in the shadow of death. The youth of the Apocalypse must rise up, we must face the enemy, and conquer.

The first step we must take is to recognize the enemy for who he is, and look him in the eye. We are fighting the machine of Nihilism. The mad prophet of Nihilism, Friedrich Nietzsche, defined Nihilism in its absolute form: "That there is no truth; that there is no 'thing in itself.' This alone is Nihilism and of the most extreme kind."²² It is to this end of Nihilism that the world has come today. This is the abyss of darkness; for without truth there is no light.

The statement, "There is no truth," is itself a metaphysical statement. It is not made from sensible knowledge and cannot be proved. Rather, it is a confession of faith in untruth.²³

That "there is no absolute state of affairs" is itself an absolute statement with its own truth-claim. In claiming its own absolute truth that there is no absolute truth, Nihilism contradicts itself and proves its own utter falsehood.

In such a Nihilist philosophy, or more accurately, faith in untruth, one is left with only a vague "hope" in "relative truth." Yet if we look to modern man's gauge of truth: science; the concept of "relative truth" is obliterated. If there were no

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absolute principles of truth to begin with, there would be no criteria by which to classify anything as knowledge or truth.²⁴

Science has revealed much of how the physical world is governed. Despite its discoveries, however the most fundamental questions still remain unanswered: how life began and how the universe was created still remains a mystery. The “big bang theory” doesn’t get to the core of the question, in that it presupposes a world of matter. Where did the elementary particles come from? It is a scientific law of nature that matter cannot be created or destroyed. This is the paradox of science: here we are, but how did we get here? Why is there something instead of nothing? If matter cannot be created or destroyed, then, since its creation, the universe can only have changed. Its creation must be super-natural. Here man and his sciences finds its limit, and the science of metaphysics begins. Now we must question everything we have taken for granted. If science cannot answer the deepest questions concerning our existence, who will?

Contemporary scientists are at a loss for any plea. They possess a great intelligence but are completely lost in a maze of theories about existence, life, and death to such an extent that all they can do is pose questions in profound ways. The most advanced and popular of scientists and thinkers, Stephen Hawking, is left to ask:

If we do discover a complete theory, it should in time be understandable in broad principle by everyone, not just a few scientists. Then philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people shall be able to take part in the discussion of the question why; of why we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would know the mind of God.²⁵

Looking to science and nature, we can only see the truths of physics revealed in the universe. Principles such as gravity or Newton’s Laws of motion are absolute “laws” or “truths” that are not changeable.²⁶ The multitudes of phenomena that occur

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in the universe are not “relative,” but definite results of specific laws or “truths” of nature.

Through examining the principles of nature that govern the physical world, two things are realized: (1) the universe is upheld by an unseen principle of truth. (2) Man, who is part of the universe, is totally subject to these unseen realities of truth.

The point is that the idea of “relative truth” has only to do with man’s understanding of life, and nothing to do with the truth itself. Man tells himself, “It’s all relative,” when he cannot comprehend or will not put out the energy to understand the world surrounding him. He mistakes the changes in the material world for the invisible principles of truth that govern the material world. The idea of “relative truth” is an escape from the question of truth. The bottom line is that in the proclamation of “relative truth” man is caught in a lie that reveals the untruth in himself and has nothing to do with the question of absolute truth.

In the end, “relative truth” is a self-contradiction, as is its mother Nihilism, and is actually just another form of Nihilism in disguise. Further, whoever knowingly or unknowingly chooses to believe in Nihilism does so not out of logical reasoning, but out of a blind act of will, in an action of faith. Nihilism is the faith of falsehood. It is not from logical proof alone that we reject Nihilism; we also reject the fruits of this diseased tree—insanity and death.

The youth of today is a rootless generation floating in the mire of corruption in a Nihilist world. Yet, within each one of us is planted a seed of truth that recognizes the surrounding mire of falsehood. It is that image of truth within us that sparks the rebellion against the sea of lies we are drowning in.

Truth cannot root in falsehood. When that spark of truth dies within us, our rebellion turns into a double negative: hate cannot cast out hate. Until our rebellion is rooted in truth, it will not be successful in conquering the world that oppresses us. If we continue to rebel in a spirit of greed, anger, and hatred,

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we will defeat ourselves; we will become unto ourselves that very spirit of destruction against which we are fighting.

We are fighting against the father of lies—the one who abides when truth is absent. We are fighting against Nihilism, the Spirit of Antichrist, whose fruits produce madness, suicide, slavery, murder, and destruction. It is this spiritual wickedness that has killed God in the hearts of mankind.

But God is not dead. It is only the soul of modern man that is dead. God is waiting with open arms to embrace His children. At this moment, Perfect Truth is calling all the victims of this modern age of Nihilism: *Come unto Me, all you who are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Only seek me out.

The Search

The question of truth is a matter of life and death. This is the question that lies at the bottom of every heart. From the beginning of time, philosophers have quarreled over this question more than any other. The question of truth is itself the core of all philosophy, science, and religion. Upon the question of truth lies the meaning of life and death.

The negation of Nihilism and its destruction is not by itself a complete proof of truth. How do we perceive truth? Is truth real or just an abstract idea? Can we know truth? How is truth revealed?

A foreshadowing of the revelation of truth took place in ancient China where there lived a wise man named Lao Tzu (about 500 B.C.). He gave his life to the study of human nature and the natural world. After a lifetime spent in contemplation on the mystery of life, Lao Tzu arrived at the philosophy of *Tao*. *Tao* means “way” or “path of life.” In his book, the *Tao Teh Ching*, Lao Tzu writes poetically about his observations of certain truths of life revealed in human nature and the natural world. These poetic observations reveal the philosophy of a universe that is upheld by an unseen force.

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王乃天天乃道
道乃久沒身不殆

不知常妄作凶
知常容容乃公
公乃王

歸根曰靜是謂復
命曰常知常曰明

致虛極守靜篤
萬物並作吾以觀
復夫物芸芸各復
歸其根

Touch ultimate emptiness;
Hold steady and still.

All things work together.
I have watched them reverting
And have seen how they flourish
And return again, each to his
roots.

This, I say, is the stillness,
A retreat to one's roots;
Or better yet, return
To the will of God,
Which is, I saw, to constancy.
The knowledge of constancy
I call enlightenment and say
That not to know it
Is blindness that works evil.

But when you know
What eternity is
You have stature.
And stature means righteousness,
And righteousness is kingly,
And kingliness divine.
And divinity is the Way
Which is final.

Then, though you die,
You shall not perish.²⁷

Through expressing bits of truth, Lao Tzu reveals the greater truth that governs the whole of creation. This is the beginning of an understanding of truth as a singular, unseen, and absolute God.

One hundred years after Lao Tzu came the Greek philosopher Socrates. In a world dominated by pagan beliefs in



The Greek philosophers.

multiple gods, Socrates taught the philosophy of a universe supported by a single truth, an unseen wisdom. In Greek this understanding of truth is expressed by the word *Logos*, which translates as “word” or “word of truth.”

Wholly dedicated to the path of wisdom and virtue, Socrates lived an ascetic life of abstinence and meditation on philosophy, and taught a doctrine of renunciation and the pursuit of the one truth. Socrates was followed by many disciples who emulated his style of life. Because of his radical way of life and his great influence among the youth, the pagan world of Greece was stirred up, and Socrates, like a true rebel against falsehood, was persecuted for his beliefs and way of life. Finally he was put on trial. He was given the choice of renouncing his philosophy and confessing foolish ideas about the pagan gods, or else being sentenced to death. Socrates chose death.

The Soul

From the beginning of time—from the ancient religions of the Native American Indians to the Greek philosophers of ancient times, man has believed in the immortality of the soul.

The soul is revealed in man's internal makeup. Man can perceive the immortal nature of his soul by the unseen attributes within him: (1) the *conscience*, an inner voice that guides him through life's decisions; (2) the *mind*, the ability to reason with which man is endowed, (3) *Free will*. In man's gift of free will, all the unseen attributes are joined. The will is the action of the spirit. Man uses his conscience, his mind, and his heart to decide what he wills to do. By free will man possesses freedom: freedom to create or destroy; freedom to live or die; freedom to love or hate. (4) The *heart*. Man's capacity for spiritual feelings such as faith, hope, and love reveal his immaterial nature.

Finally, man is aware of his being; he acknowledges his existence and his free will. And so, if he studies the unseen qualities within himself, he will be able to perceive a spiritual and immortal nature—the soul.

In Lao Tzu and in Socrates we see the human soul reaching out to grasp the eternal truth. In the *Tao* and the *Logos* human philosophy reaches its summit and yet the soul is still not satisfied: the realization that the created world is governed by an invisible and eternal force that is perfect and beyond human comprehension. This force is the Source and Cause of life. This is the realization of God—the Creator of all things visible and invisible.

Existence of God

The truth of God cannot be perceived by the mind alone. As God is immaterial, there can be no scientific or mathematical proof of His existence. Faith in God requires an act of will

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to believe. This is why the existence of God will never be fully proven or disproven. Man is forced to use the spiritual faculty of faith. This is in accord with God's infinite wisdom—man is forced to use his spiritual nature to perceive God, Who is Spirit. And what is faith? Faith is love.

Faith can be described as the unified effort of the *mind* (reason), *heart* (feeling), and *free will* to understand what is inaccessible to the mind alone. The Russian mystic John Sergiev of Kronstadt, who lived at the turn of the century, once stated:

Faith is sureness of spiritual truth, of That which Is, or of God; of the existence of the spiritual world with all its properties, similarly as we are sure of the material world with all the things that belong to it.²⁸

In faith, which is love, we begin to approach the creator. Truly, the perfection of purpose in the physical world reveals the wisdom of creation's Cause. By observing the creation of the creator—the natural world, the Mind behind the universe is revealed. Why do birds fly south in the winter? What causes the sunflower to follow the path of the sun, absorbing its life-giving rays? Who raises an entire tree from a tiny seed that lay in the dirt. The beauty of creation declares the Beauty of the creator which is beyond comprehension. Nature is the canvas of the Master Artist. Mountains, seas, rivers, and all living creatures glorify the One Who fashioned them.

The soul by nature seeks the truth, seeks God—and by looking at creation, the soul can perceive a beauty and wisdom that reveal the attributes of the truth and the Creator. This is a way man can perceive God. But the search doesn't end with the realization of God, it continues as the soul begins to know God.

The great Athanasius of 4th-century Egypt describes this first step of understanding the creator:

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For of what use is the existence to the creature if it cannot know its maker? How could men be reasonable beings if they had no knowledge of the Word and Reason of the Creator, through whom they had received their being? They would be no better than the beasts had they no knowledge save of earthly things; and why should God have made them at all, if He had not intended them to know Him?²⁹

Then mankind begins to wait for direct revelation from God, knowing that human understanding is imperfect and limited. Only then will God reveal the fullness of truth.

Revelation

According to the unfathomable wisdom of the Creator, the mysteries of creation were revealed to the prophets of God beginning with the Israelite prophet Moses (1550 B.C.) so that he might lead the nation of Israel, and all humanity, to the knowledge of God.

The word “Israel” means “to see God.” A true Israelite is one who “sees” God with the eye of his soul. Historically, the nation of Israel was a group of people who followed the revelations that Moses received from God. In a broader sense, Israel represents humanity’s relationship with God.

Chosen by God to be a leader of his people, who had been enslaved by the Egyptians, Moses was left as a baby on the banks of the Nile river in Egypt. By God’s providence he was found by the Pharaoh’s daughter and raised in the royal household. When he was already an old man, eighty years old, he received a commission direct from God to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt—not only out of physical enslavement, but out of spiritual shackles as well. So began Israel and all of humanity’s search for freedom, both physical and spiritual.

Moses, the prophet of God, then received a set of commandments or laws from God on the peak of Mount Sinai in the depths of the Egyptian desert. These commandments were given by the Creator to humanity that had fallen into the



The Prophet Moses receiving revelation from God on Mount Sinai.

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depths of lawlessness and corruption so that humanity would have access to the incorruption and perfection that had been lost. These God-inspired commandments were a moral code for the people, based on love of God and neighbor.

Before Moses and the prophets of God, mankind was groping within the limits of empty philosophy and superstition. If there is a Mind behind the universe, is it not logical that its wisdom would enlighten the minds of humanity? And is it not logical that God, Who is perfect in wisdom, would reveal Himself to the universe? Moses was given the first key that unlocked the door to the other world that revealed the possibility of union with God. The divine revelations given to Moses were humanity's first step toward the knowledge of God's truth.

After Moses, the prophets Daniel, Jeremiah, King David, and Isaiah announced that an "Anointed One" would come to reveal the fullness of God's truth. In fully revealing God's truth on earth, the "Anointed One" would be also the "Messiah" or "Savior," one who saves mankind from the chains of both spiritual and physical death.

The prophet Isaiah spoke by inspiration from God when he said:

For a Child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace: he shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom; to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and for ever: the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.³⁰

People interpreted Isaiah's prophecy in an earthly way, and so were expecting the "Anointed One" to come in great splendor as an earthly king upon the throne of King David. But David himself, who was not only an earthly king but a prophet

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as well, had prophesied saying: *God shall come visibly, and shall not keep silence.*³¹ To state that God the Creator would come visibly was a totally otherworldly statement that would later prove to be a prophecy of the overlapping of this world with the other world; God Who is immaterial and invisible would become material and visible, thus making God personal.

From these and many other prophecies the Israelites were anxiously awaiting the coming of the King of Israel, the “Anointed One” who would set the nation of Israel and all humanity free. Some groups, such as the Essenes, cut themselves off from the world and awaited His coming in secluded ascetic communities in the wilderness.

The most mysterious prophecy came from the divinely-inspired Isaiah: *Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.*³² The word “Emmanuel” translates as “God is with us.” The statement that a virgin would bear a child with the name “God is with us” was difficult for many, for the imperfect mind of man couldn’t understand and comprehend the fact that God would become a child through the purity of a virgin. Thus, this prophecy remained a mystery for centuries.

The final prophet to arise was one whose own coming had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah. This was the prophet John, the final prophet before the coming of the “Anointed One.” He was raised in the wilderness in total purity and when he became of age he emerged from the wilderness as one who had direct contact with God. He then spent his days in fasting and prayer, crying unto the lost humanity that the kingdom of God is at hand, for he was a voice preparing the world for God who was to come visibly.

Many people came to the prophet John to hear his cry and he foretold to them: *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*³³ Isaiah prophesied of the prophet John and the coming “Savior” centuries beforehand when he said: *The voice*



The Prophet John portrayed with wings because of his angelic life and because he was a messenger of God. He is portrayed with his severed head, because he was beheaded for preparing the way for the Truth.

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*of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a path for our God.... And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.*³⁴
And so it was fulfilled in humility and power.

Incarnation

Just when the world thinks that God is dead, God becomes flesh. As soon as man thought himself free from his own conscience and free from the embrace of the living God, this seeming distant and impersonal God becomes incarnate, accessible, personal, and even a person.

The Messiah, the Son of God was born of a pure woman in order to reveal his divine origin. This is where the perfection of the incarnation (flesh taking) of God was revealed; since God who is all pure was to become flesh, as a human being he was to enter this world through a pure woman of the lineage of a king and prophet called David as was prophesied. Having God as His Father His name was Jesus Christ. Jesus means *Savior*, and Christ means *Anointed One*. Thus God was manifested in a manner beyond human comprehension—born of a virgin womb and in fulfillment of prophecy.

Christ the God-man, was perfect from birth and dwelt in this imperfect world, suffering from birth to death as any other person. When the God appointed time came, He detached Himself from all things of this world and began to reveal to the world His purpose as God become man. Thus God the creator came to His creation and revealed the truth in its fullness.

When Christ would speak every word was an exact and perfect revelation of the immortality of the soul, life after death, the physical world and the other world, the war and peace of spiritual life, and God as absolute Truth.

He prophesied of His own rejection by the world which He came to give eternal life to and prophesied of His own death—the death that God suffered by the very ones whom He created.



The Virgin Mother of God holding the Christ-Child.
Icon painted by the disciple of Christ, the Apostle Luke.

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God became man, suffered, revealed *the way, the truth and the life*, then died, completing the most perfect of truths.

Before the coming of Jesus Christ, mankind was estranged from God. Even those that listened to the prophets had only a limited knowledge of God's truth for mankind had not yet been given the revelation of communion with God through the incarnation of God. Though they had a divinely-revealed Law, they were still lacking spiritually. Many even forgot the first two commandments: love of God and love of others. Mankind needed an example of what exactly love of God and humanity is, and it needed to hear the truth concerning the immortal nature of the soul and the other world. Mankind needed to be reunited with God.

The Son of God

This Nihilistic world of faithless destruction preaches that we must believe only in what we can see or touch. Now we are faced square in the eyes by God, Who became a person and yet remained God whom the world could see and touch. The Truth in its fullness was revealed and still the world refuses to believe what it feels and what it sees.

The crucifixion is recorded in the annals of history, and the world numbers the years in relation to Christ's birth (B.C./A.D.) Thus, all rational human beings at least accept that Jesus Christ was born, lived, and was crucified.

Many people today say that Jesus Christ was a "great man," a "true humanitarian," or even a "prophet." Others say that Christ was still alive when they took him off the cross and placed him in the tomb, and that is why he was seen alive after the crucifixion. These are efforts to make Christ into "just another man," in a feeble attempt to reconcile their unbelief with the truth of God.

The author and Oxford professor C. S. Lewis wrote about those who disbelieve that Christ was God:



Jesus Christ—God become flesh.
Ancient icon from about 500 A.D.

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“I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.” That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, Son of God, or else a madman.³⁵

When Christ was in this world he said many things that revealed his two natures. Christ said, “*I and my Father are one.*”³⁶ This is a personal claim of His oneness and equality with God the Father. In saying this He is either crazy or equal with God.

The truth that Christ is the Messiah proclaimed by the prophets was revealed when Christ went to the synagogue in Nazareth, Israel. While the people were gathered there to worship God and hear the word of God in the writings of the prophets, Christ stood up to read;

And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah, and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book and gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.³⁷

This was the beginning of the revelation of the truth of Christ to a world that rejects truth. After Christ revealed this prophecy of Himself the people in the temple were filled with

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wrath, and rose up and drove him out of the city. They wished to kill Him for his words were spoken with power.³⁸

The truth of Jesus Christ as the Messiah (Savior) and Anointed One foretold by the prophets is also shown in Christ's conversation at a water well with a woman of the land of Samaria. She came to draw water, and Christ said to her:

Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Then Christ reveals the secrets of her heart. He told her something that nobody knew, that she was living immorally with several different men. She then said to Him, "I see that you are prophet." Jesus said to her:

The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming who is called Christ. When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her:

I am he, the one who is speaking to you.³⁹

Many times in His teachings Christ proclaims His oneness with God: *All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.*⁴⁰ In these mystical words Christ reveals His natures—God and human and also that He is the way by which man can commune with God.

The identity of the person of Jesus Christ is most plainly revealed when Christ asks His disciples who they think He is.

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Christ asked: *Whom do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said to them, you are Blessed Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father which is in heaven.*"⁴¹

Christ's closest disciple, John who was a teenager during Christ's life, clearly states the Truth of God's incarnation by saying:

And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.⁴²

After hearing Christ's own words and the testimonies of his disciples, it is irrational to claim that Jesus Christ was only a "great man" or "true humanitarian." The world is forced to make a decision: acceptance or rejection. Several crucial matters are involved in this decision. For a child of Generation X who has been scarred for life by Nihilism's conquest of the world, it is difficult to accept any "good news"⁴³ as realistic. In this world of wickedness the first impulse is to disregard anything that claims to be ultimately good. But we must be above this world in all respects and be strong enough to recognize God when He reveals Himself to us.

In the history of world religions, Jesus Christ is the only man, that is proven to have existed, who claimed to be God incarnate. All other religions were founded by men who claimed to have knowledge of God, or are based on a philosophy. But how could so many people believe such a bold claim?

Being fully God and fully man in one perfect being, Christ became the answer to man's dilemma of how to commune with God. After Christ's coming in the flesh, God and man were united.

By foretelling his betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection from the dead, and then fulfilling them in deed, Christ gave the

final proof that He is God. No one else in the history of mankind has ever made such prophecies and fulfilled them.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Jesus Christ is the *Logos*, the “Word of God,” and the Tao, the “Way”, the pre-eternal Truth of God come in the flesh. Christ says: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*⁴⁴ If the word religion means to reunite God and man, then Christ is Himself true religion: God and man united into one being.

Jesus Christ’s identity as the Word of God is revealed in the Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.⁴⁵

Concerning the mystery of the union of God and man in Jesus Christ, Athanasius the Great of 4th century Egypt says:

As man He was living a human life, and as Word He was sustaining the life of the universe, and as Son He was in constant union with the Father.⁴⁶

Christ came to earth to reveal the fullness of God’s love. By His incarnation, Jesus Christ manifested truth and love in a way that enabled humanity to perceive the absolute truth and love of God. By this manifestation of God’s love, a way was opened for man to reach eternal life. In revealing eternal life and the immortality of the soul Christ also came to conquer death and reveal the resurrection.

Jesus Christ came with a radical doctrine of love that was beyond the wisdom of the world. The depth of love that Christ taught and manifested originated from the Source of life, love, and creation—God. Christ said to *Love those who hate you,*⁴⁷

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for love conquers hate, love overcomes evil, love vanquishes fear.

Although Love is the pinnacle of Christ's teaching, rebellion takes the second place. The rebellion is against this world. He taught detachment from this world, from possessions, and from this world's corrupt logic. He taught that the rebellion, that begins with love of God and man, ends in this detachment from the world. When Christ said, "*I did not come to bring peace but a sword*,"⁴⁸ he was referring to this rebellion, a spiritual rebellion of good against evil that begins within.

Christ showed us this detachment from the world when he said:

If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.⁴⁹

Christ showed us detachment from possessions when He went into the temple, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers. Christ said to them: *It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*⁵⁰ And also when He said:

Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; neither for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than clothes? But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.⁵¹

Christ taught detachment from this world's fallen logic when He said:

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?⁵²

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After revealing to the world such radical teachings and after revealing that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—He was crucified.

The Cross

After a life of suffering for the sake of revealing the truth Christ suffered unto death for the ultimate fulfillment of the truth.

Because of the miracles that Christ did and the power of his words, the “righteous” who were jealous sought to kill Christ. They made up an excuse and stirred up the people against Him to such an extent that their wicked intent couldn’t be overlooked. Christ was then betrayed by one of His own disciples with a kiss and turned in to the “authorities.”

Under Caesar, the emperor of the “whole of civilization,” was the governor of Israel named Pontius Pilate. Pilate entered the judgment hall, summoned Jesus and asked Him, “Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered:

My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my servants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.

Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered:

You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.⁵³

Pilate then said to him, “What is truth?” Then Pilate scourged him. And the soldiers stripped Him and put on him a purple robe. They made a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and began to spit on Him and said: Hail, King of the Jews! And they struck him with their hands.

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So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" When the chief priests and the people saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no fault against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid. He entered the judgment hall again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate then said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him:

You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above.

From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against Caesar."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench and said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Christ; and carrying the cross, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two thieves, one on either side, with Christ between them. And one of the thieves railed on him saying, "If you are the Christ save yourself and us. But the other thief said, "Don't you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation?" And he said unto Jesus, "Remember me, Lord, in your kingdom." And Jesus said unto him:

Today you will be with me in paradise.



Jesus Christ—crucified in the flesh.
Icon from about 1300 A.D.

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There was darkness over all the earth. Jesus knowing that all things were accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled said, "I thirst." And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it to his mouth and He said, "It is finished." And Jesus cried out with a loud voice,

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

And having said this he gave up the spirit. God had been betrayed with a kiss, struck with blows, spit on, mocked, stripped naked and crucified in total silence.

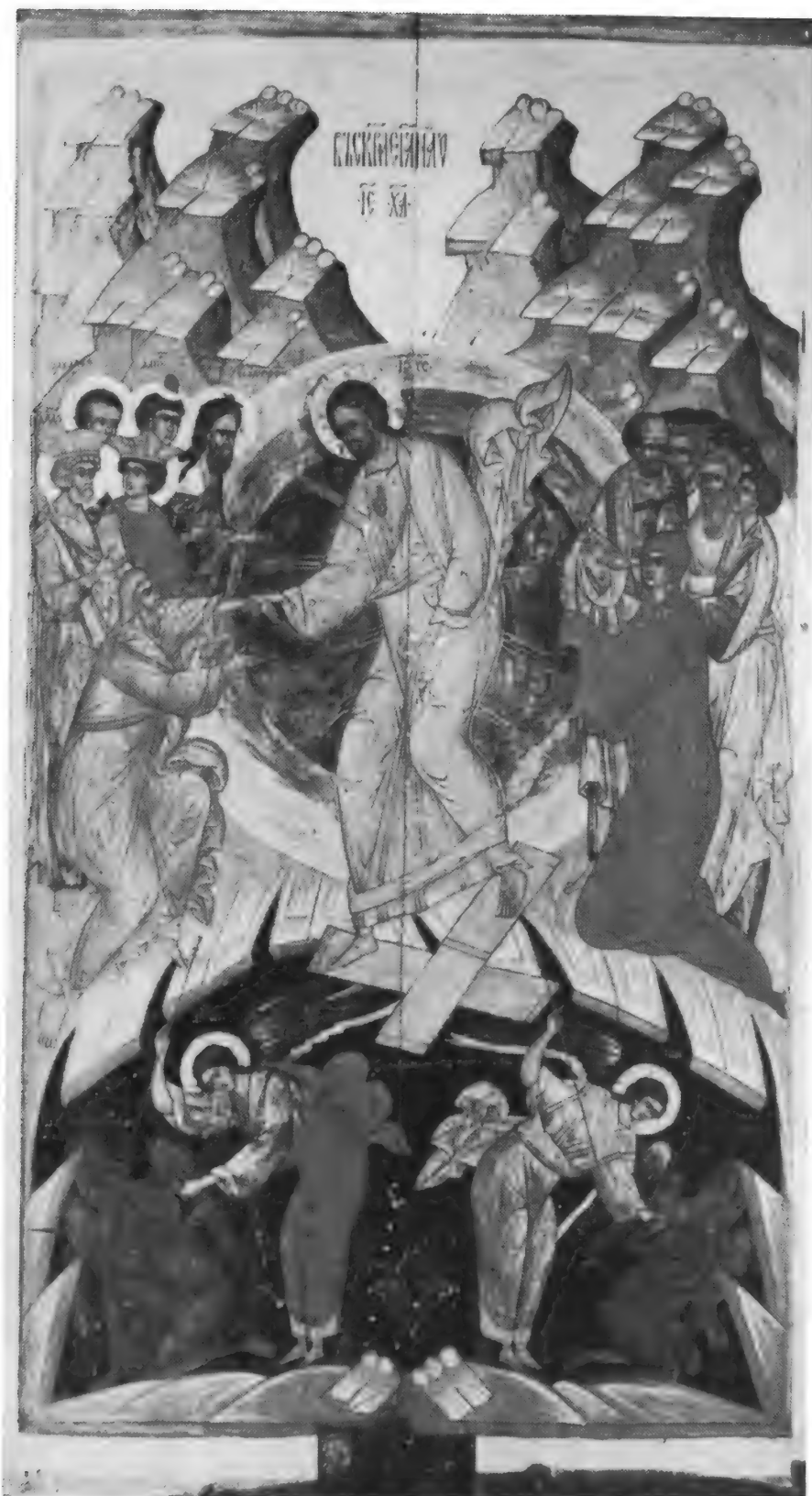
This is the height of Truth—the Cross. It is the center of Christ's teaching. By suffering the crucifixion, Christ revealed the path that leads to eternal life. Gods crucifixion reveals the truth of the depth of God's love, for *We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us.*⁵⁴ *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*⁵⁵

For a world that loves self-satisfaction, Christ's message is a most difficult one. The teaching of the cross is in radical opposition to the wisdom of this world. While the world teaches us to use every means to prolong and enhance our life, Christ teaches us that to die to the world is to live eternally.

Every act in the life of Jesus Christ is a supreme teaching to mankind. In the crucifixion, humanity is given the highest teaching of love, the most powerful example of humility, the greatest example of suffering for truth. Christ suffered not only the cross, the nails, and the spear, but rejection by his own children for revealing to them the truth of God's love. As his children condemned Him to death on the cross, Christ was saving humanity and opening the door to eternal life.

Resurrection

Just when the world thought that God is dead and is bleeding to death under our knife.... He resurrects from the dead.



The Resurrection of Christ from the dead, trampling down the gates of hell, with Angels overcoming the demons below.

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The teaching of the crucifixion always goes hand in hand with the resurrection. Just as all paths lead to a destination, so the cross is the way to resurrection, humanity's ultimate destination.

After Christ was crucified in front of masses of people, his body was taken and placed in a tomb. Because Christ had openly said that he would rise from the dead on the third day, soldiers of the temple guard were set to guard the tomb so that his disciples could not steal his body and claim that he had resurrected.

On the third day the women disciples of Christ came to the tomb to anoint his body, and found the soldiers lying "as if dead," stunned by the terror of an other-worldly manifestation. To their surprise and the world's amazement, Christ had risen from the dead.

Christ appeared in person, first to the women disciples and later to the Apostles. By rising from the dead on the third day, as he had foretold, Jesus showed that he is in truth the Christ, God incarnate. The risen Christ spoke: *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*⁵⁶

But if Christ was in the grave for three days where was His spirit? He was in hell. He shattered the gates of hell and as God, unshackled the souls that were in prison there. For until the incarnation and death of God, heaven was closed.

By His resurrection, Christ reveals to mankind the eternal life that is in God: *He that hears my word and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come unto condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.*⁵⁷ As the Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ answers man's deepest fear in life: Death. Jesus Christ was risen from the dead not only in His spirit, but in his physical body, just as He shall raise our physical bodies also.

After Christ's resurrection from the dead He appeared to His disciples. Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them,

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“Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. Then he said to them:

These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them:

Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.⁵⁸

Then he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven, and they worshipped him.

The Trinity

Although the essence of God is beyond human comprehension, some of His properties have been revealed to mankind. Concerning the paradox of man’s comprehension of God, a wise Monk of the East named John Damascene once explained:

Now, one who would speak or hear about God should know beyond any doubt that in what concerns theology (the study of God) and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, not all things are inexpressible and not all are capable of expression, and neither are all things unknowable nor are they all knowable. That which can be known is one thing, whereas that

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which can be said is another, just as it is one thing to speak and another to know. Furthermore, many of those things about God which are not clearly perceived cannot be fittingly described, so that we are obliged to express in human terms things which transcend the human order.⁵⁹

It is only in a spirit of reverence, such as this holy monk possesses, that a person can begin to understand God. God cannot be put in a box or laid out in the lab to be dissected. If someone does try this small-minded approach, it is not God that he dissects, but his own illusions.

In describing God, the monk John begins with His limitlessness:

Now, we both know and confess that God is without beginning and without end, everlasting and eternal, uncreated, unchangeable...invisible, unfathomable, good, just, the maker of all created things....

From there John's explanation grows more specific:

We furthermore know and confess that God is one, that is to say, one substance, and that He is both understood to be and is in three Persons—I mean the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰

This conception of God as a Trinity united in One without division is the point where human understanding and language find their limit. The truth of the Trinity was revealed by Christ's command to the Apostles after the resurrection: *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*⁶¹

In order to bring the mystery of the Holy Trinity closer to our earthly concepts, and the incomprehensible a little nearer to our understanding, the holy Fathers of old used comparisons from nature: three candles giving one inseparable light; the sun as the Father, the sun's rays as the Son, and the sun's light as the Holy Spirit; a spring (the Father), fountain (the

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Son), and river (the Holy Spirit) making one watercourse; a clover composed of three leaves joined into one.

Still, these are only earthly conceptions of heavenly realities. The wise Gregory the Theologian concludes:

I have very carefully considered this matter in my own mind, and have looked at it in every point of view, in order to find some likeness of this mystery, but I have been unable to discover anything on earth with which to compare the nature of the Godhead.⁶²

Although the essence of God is ultimately unattainable for human thought, the existence of God is real and active in each moment of life. Nothing has been created that was not created by God. He is everywhere present. God the Father is the ever-flowing Source, the foundation and Father of all being, the Father of mercies Who loves and cares for us, His creation—for we are His children by grace.

With us is God the Son, begotten by the Father before all ages, true Light of true Light, living Power and Wisdom, the subsisting Word, the perfect and living image and icon of the invisible God, Who became visible.

In us and in all creation, by God's power and grace, is the Holy Spirit, Who fills all things, is the Giver and Creator of life, Comforter, Treasury and Source of good things.

Above us, with us, and in us is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; Trinity in Unity; One God. Selah.⁶³

Eastern Orthodox Christianity

In the revelation of truth God did not leave mankind without a way to live and die for this truth. We were given the great and otherworldly ideal of Christianity. Christianity is the link between God and man in belief and faith.

This belief and faith is a power that *hell cannot prevail over*. It is the assembly of those who desire truth, that desire God in His fullness. This unity and gathering of believers is the assem-

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bly that Christ came to gather, for the word assembly translates as church.

In order to begin to understand such a mystical thing as the church that God has given humanity for its spiritual progress we must completely abandon any preconceived ideas of what the word “church” means in modern use. For in this age of religious division and destruction we have been given a shattered picture of what the church is.

The Church of Christ is not an earthly institution. It is the body of people who confess and worship the Truth of God. This church as understood since its beginning, has two inseparable parts: the church in this world and the church in the other world—in heaven. There is no division between its earthly and heavenly realms. It is from this connection with the heavenly realm that the earthly Church receives grace, and by which direct contact with heaven and God is possible.

The church in this world is the assembly of believers who co-struggle and co-suffer for the cause. The otherworldly church is the assembly in heaven who finished their course and attained to the cause. Both work together making an overlapping of this world and the other world.

After the resurrection, Christ told the Apostles: *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*⁶⁴

From Jerusalem the Apostles and disciples of Christ traveled to diverse lands, preaching the truth of Christ: the Apostles Peter and Paul went to Greece and Rome, Mark went to Ethiopia, Thomas went to India, Andrew went to Russia and Romania, Aristobulus went to England. Being of one mind and one soul, they taught one faith and one truth.

Thus, the “Church of Christ” was formed in apostolic times. Perhaps the world’s best kept secret is the fact that this original church, known as the Orthodox Church, still exists today preserving its original ancient, apostolic, and otherworldly spirit. Even in these last times, the Orthodox Church maintains the rites and doctrines of the original Church since



Eastern Orthodox monastery church in the wilderness
of northern California.

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the beginning. The reason why the Orthodox Church of Christ has survived nearly 2,000 years until this day, and will continue until the end of times, is that the Truth of God is beyond space and time.

The purpose of the Church is to unite the individual soul and humanity with God in a bond that passes through bodily death and continues spiritually eternally, the revelation of eternal life, the firm proofs, the demonstration, the real phenomenon of the Christian faith, but the building of the walls and floor, the decoration and all the furnishings, the roof and domes of the Christian faith. A ray from the spiritual world shines through every word of the Holy Scriptures, and has shone throughout the two thousand year history of the Church. Christianity has opened wide the gate of the other world, opened to such an extent that it would be almost wrong to call it a “religion,” because that would open one to the mistake of muddling it with man-made institutions. It is Revelation, God’s Revelation, to those who love truth.⁶⁵

CHAPTER TWO

LOVERS OF TRUTH

THOSE who received the person of Christ—God become flesh—and followed the path of truth He revealed became misfits and outcasts in this world. Ever since the crucifixion they have been considered “enemies of the people.”⁶⁶ These lovers of Truth were named Christians.

The first Christians were rejected by the established world from which they came, and were persecuted unto torture and death, fulfilling Christ God’s prophecy:

If the world hate you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you.⁶⁷

To escape persecution they fled to the catacombs—places where the dead were buried—and prayed there in hiding, cut off from the world. They lived in constant expectation of martyrdom, and so were always vigilant, preparing themselves for the other world. Earthly wealth, comfort, and honor had no meaning for them, for suffering and persecution stripped them bare of such things. *They possessed nothing of their own, but had all things in common.* In short, *they were of one heart and one soul*,⁶⁸ and were not of this world.

The ruins of the burnt city of Rome were still smoking when the Emperor Nero conceived the idea of satiating the people’s rage by the blood of Christians. After killing his own mother and burning half of Rome, he had to find a scapegoat.

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Nero, whose name is associated with everything cruel and insane, was the first to order a persecution against those self-sacrificing lovers of truth. The cry on every side was for the extermination of Christians; the whole pagan world rose in arms against them.⁶⁹ Thus Nero set the stage in the “arena” for 2000 years of bloody persecution.

The bloodshed was kicked off by the execution of two of Christ’s disciples named Peter and Paul. The records from the time of their execution have preserved for us the facts of their



martyrdom. After Paul was beheaded for the truth that he could not deny, it was Peter’s turn to die. He was to be crucified. As he approached the cross at the place of execution, he asked if he could be crucified upside down—because, in his own words, “I am not worthy to be crucified like my Lord.” Then, having reversed the cross, they nailed his feet up.⁷⁰ And there, in the sight of the world and in the eyes of the generations to come, he was nailed for the Truth.

Martyrdom was considered to be the ultimate act of renunciation of the world, and the highest form of spirituality. Extremely cruel forms of torture were used both on men and women; they were beheaded, burned, drowned, dismembered,

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lacerated, and crucified for their belief in the one God. They were put to the test by the anti-theists and the pagans who tried to force these believers to renounce their faith but to no avail. There are uncountable, extreme cases in the history of martyrdom that proved their undying victory that was beyond this world.

The call to a violent death was much a reality for those who believed in God and His Christ. It was a matter of vital importance for the believer, that the body which is capable of bearing God within is enabled to endure the torments of a martyr's fate. Only Christ God who became flesh and His Spirit dwelling deep within them could enable them to be victorious in the invasion of their souls and bodies by the overwhelming pain of torture and by the chilling fear of death. It is these martyrs throughout the centuries that have been the ultimate example of ascetic struggle: *death to the world*.⁷¹

After more than three centuries of torture, and with the blood of literally thousands of lovers of truth, the agonizing cry of martyrdom was silenced. The pain and sufferings of these lovers of truth opened the door to freedom. In the fourth century the faith of these outcasts became the "official religion" of what was then known as the civilized world. The immoral laws of the Roman Empire were exchanged for the moral values, and the peace and compassion of Christian truth.

With the legalization of Christianity, one vital problem arose. Without the suffering of persecution, the believers began to conform to this world. In their freedom and wealth they began to forget the necessity of poverty and suffering. The idea entered Christian thought that just belonging to the "organized religion" of the truth would save them. The "church" began to be seen as a worldly political institution and not as a means to reach perfection in heaven.

Again the lovers of Truth entered a stage of persecution—but this persecution was a self-inflicted one that seemed mad in the eyes of the world. Men and women seeking in the Truth more than just a worldly institution fled into the deserts and

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wilderness. Like the walls of the catacombs, the wide expanses of the Egyptian, Syrian, and Palestinian deserts isolated them from the influence of the world.

Through fasting, chastity, vigilance, by labor and asceticism, the ancient desert-dwellers recreated the catacomb persecutions voluntarily. They became lifelong martyrs seeking to be misfits in this world. Thus the first rebellion against the principles of this world began; and the first rebels were called monks.⁷²

Seeing the vanity of this dying world and desiring to escape the tyranny of fashion, they lived in caves, on mountains, in huts, in clefts of rocks, in total poverty, without any concern for the pleasures of their own flesh or their outward appearance. They lived only to die to this world, and to the world they were as good as dead.

They would avoid the cities like a disease, and would eat only once a day or even once a week, preferring a life of hunger to an empty life of self-satisfying pleasure. They slept only a couple of hours a night, and that not in a bed but sitting in a chair. They despised sleep, for it kept them from conscious union with God. They warred against their own corrupt nature, against their passions and faults, seeking only perfection.

At first these misfits lived alone, desiring a life of reclusion and silence. But others, seeing their righteous abandonment of a self-destructive world, also desired this seemingly crazy way of life. Large communities began to arise, and the desert became a city filled with hundreds and thousands of men and women who had the sole aim of living and dying for the truth. Thus these ascetics began to be seen as lifelong martyr's for a martyr suffers for a time then dies, but a monk voluntarily suffers for an entire lifetime being crucified daily to the world.

This way of life, called monasticism, quickly spread throughout the world, preserving the same genuine spirit of the Christian underground. Entire cities and societies found their beginnings in the simple poverty of these monks. First a monk would settle all alone in the desert or uninhabited wilderness.

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Then people would settle near him, and in time villages would grow. In this way monasticism spread through Israel, Egypt, Greece, Byzantium, Italy, Ethiopia, Ireland, Gaul (France), Romania, Serbia, Russia, America, and to all the world. Although this ideal spread to the corners of the earth, it still remains the world's best-kept secret.

The following collection of biographies are true accounts of saints throughout the centuries who gave their lives for love of the truth. Here we give only a small glimpse into the vast world of saints that set an otherworldly example of the last true rebellion.



Monk Anthony of Egypt

MONK ANTHONY OF EGYPT

Anthony was an Egyptian by birth that lived in the 4th century and, having rich parents, was raised in wealth and luxury. Not wanting a worldly education, he remained simple and illiterate. When he was eighteen years old, both his parents died and left him all their wealth.

One day as he was in church, the following scripture passage was read during the service: *If you desire to be perfect, go sell all that you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.*⁷³

Hearing this, he sold all his possessions and gave the money to the poor, keeping nothing for himself. He then fled to the Egyptian desert near the Nile River. Living alone, Anthony would often visit desert-dwellers who led a life like his own, and whatever virtues he saw in them he struggled to acquire himself, until by wisely learning from others he surpassed them all.

As he lived in the silence of the desert, many temptations attacked Anthony. When memories of his former wealth would come, he would struggle to free himself from the thoughts and war with his own fallenness, seeking the perfection he so desired.

He would often go whole nights without sleep, and he ate only dried bread, salt, and water, and these only once every few days. Seeing that bodily weakness increased his soul's intensity, his zeal grew great. Wishing to seclude himself from the world and people, Anthony moved to tombs where the dead were buried, and few people visited him.

Because he reached such a high stage of perfection, he was no longer tempted by the lusts of his flesh, or by the world. But then another temptation came. The fallen angels—demons—would appear to him and attack him, trying to drive him from his seclusion and thus deprive him of daily conversation with

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God in prayer. Many times the demons would physically assault him with such violence that afterwards he was a living corpse, unable to move in his agony. It happened that a friend would often come to give Anthony bread, and, finding him in such a state, would take him to the village. After coming to, Anthony demanded to be taken back to his tombs to continue his struggles.

After several more years of struggles, Anthony decided to leave the tombs and move to an even more secluded place for his struggle for perfection. In the mountainous area where he settled, people wanting to follow in his footsteps discovered his whereabouts and came to him. When he wouldn't open his door desiring only to be alone—alone with God, they broke it down; and he emerged as one who had mastered himself. Many, on seeing him or listening to his instructions, desired to leave the world and become monks. And the desert became a city.

Hermits gathered around Anthony in a community. Through his inspiration the desert was filled with people chanting, studying, fasting, praying, and the helping the poor. Constantly attentive to their own consciousness and human consciousness in general, these monks were able to see into the depth of the human heart.

Anthony instructed the multitude of monks about the frailty of this world compared to the greatness of the world to come. He taught them the essence of the spiritual life and the goal of life here on earth by saying one simple, yet powerful instruction: "Live as though you are not of this world and you will have peace." He revealed the many tricks of the devil, and no one doubted his instruction because his life stood as a living proof of his words. He taught them not to neglect the body completely; for, by giving it what it needs and no more, the body will not weigh down the soul, but rather will be under its control.

At this time Christians in Egypt were being slaughtered. Strongly desiring to be murdered for the faith, Anthony sought

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after persecution. He went to the city of Alexandria and taught openly from a prominent place, but his total fearlessness preserved him from death. The judge even feared his presence in the court where Christians were condemned to death. When the period of persecution ended, Anthony returned to his seclusion in the mountains.

Because of his selfless love for God, Anthony was given the mystical gift of foresight into the future. Once two brothers were traveling to meet Anthony, but on the way they ran out of water in the middle of the desert. One of the brothers died and the other lay down to await death. Then Anthony sent two monks with water to the brother still alive, for God had revealed to him the situation. They gave water to the one brother, and buried the other. When asked why he didn't send the monks out in time to save both brothers, Anthony replied that such was the will of God, for it was revealed to him after the one was already dead.

One time Anthony was given a glimpse of the other world, and of what happens to souls when they leave the body. He saw that when the body dies and the soul is released, it is attended by both good and evil angels (fleshless beings who are not human). He saw how both the good and the bad angels wanted the soul, and how, because of the person's life in this world and the decisions he had made while still alive, it was led away by the evil angels. After this vision Anthony couldn't sleep, but spent his time groaning and weeping in prayer.

Although Anthony was never educated, he was exceedingly wise. One time some philosophers came to him intending to ridicule him because he was illiterate and didn't know letters. Anthony asked them, "Which is first—the mind or letters? And which is the cause of which—the mind of the letters, or the letters of the mind?" When they replied that the mind was first and had invented the letters, Anthony said: "Now you see that in the person whose mind is advanced there is no need for letters."

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On another occasion, some who considered themselves “wise” among the pagan philosophers came to Anthony, asking for an explanation of the Christian faith, with the intent of finding contradictions by which to ridicule him and his faith. Pitying their ignorance, Anthony sighed, and then answered their question:

Which is better—to confess a cross, or your gods of vice? The sign of courage and disdain for death, or philosophies of filth? Again, which is preferable: to say that the logos, the word of God, was not changed, but remaining the same, assumed a human body for the salvation and benefit of mankind—so that sharing in the human birth he might enable mankind to share in the divine and spiritual nature....

Or to make the divine very much like the irrational beings; and on these grounds worship four-footed creatures and reptiles and images of men? For these are the objects of worship for you who are “wise”! How dare you ridicule us for saying that Christ has appeared as a man, when you, separating the soul from heaven, say that it has wandered and fallen from the vaults of heaven into the body! You are deceived in believing that the soul is uncreated, in saying that the soul is an image of the mind. When you think such things about the mind, realize that you are also blaspheming the Father of the mind Himself.

And concerning the cross, what would you say is preferable: to endure the cross and not cower in fear before any form of death; or to relate myths of the gods’ swallowing of children and murdering fathers? For these are the things you count as wise! And how is it that while you mock the cross, you do not marvel at the resurrection? And you wonder that Christ is no longer man but God?

Such were Anthony’s words, before which the confused “wise men” stood speechless. After embracing him, the men departed, being changed by the truth of Christ revealed in his words.

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When he had reached old age, Anthony saw that he was approaching death. Calling those near him, he said, "I am going the way of the fathers, for I see myself being summoned by the Lord. I will no longer be with you."

When he had said this, they embraced him; and thus he died, his face radiating light. Such was the life of the monk Anthony, the father of monasticism, the extreme lover of truth.



Martyr Eudokia

EUDOKIA

Eudokia was born in Samaria of Palestine in the 1st century. In her youth she was very beautiful, and because of her loveliness she lived a life of deep immorality. She was concerned only for the pleasures of this life, and loved the impurity of a loose sex life.

With the passage of time, many began to offer her large sums of money so that they might fulfill their lustful obsessions with her, and she became the most sought-after prostitute of that region.

One time a certain virtuous monk named Germanos was passing through her city on his way to a distant land. He stayed the night in the home of a friend who lived right next door to Eudokia. The monk chanted his prayers at the appointed time, and when finished, he pulled out of his sack a scroll with the teachings of the Holy Fathers, the great Christian spiritual teachers, and read from their writings about the end of the world. He began to read aloud from the scroll so that his friend, who also wanted to edify his soul, could listen.

That evening the prostitute Eudokia overheard the monk through an open window, and heard the words about the end of the world. She was struck to the core of her being, and tears began to stream down her cheeks when she thought about her sick way of life.

Filled with dread, Eudokia lay awake until daybreak, at which time she sent for the monk Germanos. When he arrived, Eudokia asked him, "Please tell me the meaning of those words which you read aloud last night. I ask you, tell me the truth." Then Germanos said to her, "If you desire to listen to my words, you will be saved and will be glorified unto everlasting ages. You will inherit immortal life after death. If you want to be saved, you must do two things. First you must be baptized,

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which cleanses all impurities. Second, give away all your wealth to the poor and needy.

Listening to the monk's words, Eudokia felt fear at the thought of how she would survive being poor and having to trust God alone. To this he said, "If you want to prove my words, remove your expensive clothes and for a week wear only poor and ugly ones, and lock yourself in your home and pray to God with fasting and tears. God will reveal to you what you should do."

It happened as Germanos said, and at the end of the week Eudokia received baptism and gave away all her wealth and possessions. She then went to a women's monastery and was tonsured a nun, beginning a long life of struggle in obedience, patience, vigilance, prayer and fasting. She had no more concerns for her flesh, and wasted it in the cold, depriving herself of sleep and food, punishing herself and her flesh for her past life of sensual pleasure and impurity.

After living only a few years in the monastery, Eudokia reached such a height of purity that she became a model for all the desert-dwelling monks and nuns. When the abbess and superior of the monastery died, all the nuns unanimously chose Eudokia to take her place as spiritual leader of the sisters.

At this time there was a great persecution of Christians, and all believers who didn't make sacrifice to the idols and gods were tortured and murdered. As it was known that Eudokia was a Christian, she was taken prisoner by the soldiers. When she was brought before the governor, he asked her about her faith. She replied: "I am a Christian and am the servant of the only good and compassionate God. It is Him whom I believe in with all my heart, and nothing can separate me from His love. Therefore, don't waste your time by asking me any more questions. Do what you have purposed, so as to release me from this present world."

When the governor saw the Saint's determination, he ordered that she be stripped to the waist, and then lacerated and beaten. By the time they stopped, her insides were exposed, but

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she was still alive, bearing the violence nobly. The governor then said, "Be sad for your beauty, O woman, and offer sacrifice to the gods." Eudokia with power only replied, "Believe in the true God." The governor's rage was unleashed, and he commanded that she be stripped bare and thrashed severely. Seeing her willingness to face death and her love for God, the governor's wrath was changed to sorrow for what he had done, and he let her go half dead.

With the passage of time this governor died, and another man assumed the office. He was a severe and brutal man who also persecuted Christians. When he heard of Eudokia's courage, he sent soldiers to strike off her head. Thus by her death she entered into true life, being an unconquerable lover of truth.



Monk Moses the Ethiopian

MONK MOSES THE ETHIOPIAN

In the fourth century there lived a man called Moses. Moses was of African blood, an Ethiopian to be precise, large in stature and a giant in wisdom.

As a youth, Moses was one of the most feared gangsters in northern Africa. He was the leader of a gang of outlaws, and was known to have cut people's throats. Moses' crew ravaged the hills and plundered houses, taking the goods and selling them to support the gang's riotous way of life. When Moses was not robbing houses, he would drink huge amounts of wine and spend his nights with loose women. The following account describes his infamy as a gang-leader.

He had an enemy and bore a grudge against him because one night when he wanted to steal, the man came out with dogs. Desiring to kill the man who lived on the other side of the Nile River, Moses put his knife between his teeth, placed his clothes on his head, jumped into the river and swam to the other side. While he was swimming across the river the man was able to hide by burying himself in the sand. And when Moses didn't find his enemy he killed four of his good rams, tied them together with a cord, and swam back. And having come to a slaughtering place he skinned them, ate the best parts of the meat, and sold the skins to buy wine. He then proceeded to get totally drunk before returning to his gang.

It came to pass that Moses the gang-leader, the "baddest of the bad" in northern Africa, gave up his wicked ways and resolved to live the rest of his life reconciling himself to God. He abandoned his gang and fled to the desert of Egypt, where he found the holy Elder, the monk Isidore. Moses begged the

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Elder to allow him to live as a monk in the community known as “Scetis.”

In the desert, Moses began the spiritual battle of the heart that leads to Christ. Having great physical strength, he led a rigorous life—fasting for days at a time, keeping vigil all night, and forcing his mind to pure thoughts. Due to his having spent his former life in sexual indulgence, he was attacked by the passion of lust. To combat the attacks of lust, Moses increased his ascetic labors to a nearly inhuman level. For seven years he didn’t sleep, praying all night long and only resting for an hour in the day.

Moses, who was at one time a cut-throat murderer began to learn the meaning of compassion. His love for people grew so great that he would put others before himself. He would walk at night through the desert to all of the dwellings of the monks, gathering their water sacks, and would bring them to the near by spring to fill them up. Some of the cells of the monks were as far as five miles from the spring; even the closest were still two miles away. All this Moses did in secret, so that his works would not be known by men but by God alone.

Despite Moses’ great pains and labors, the demon of lust would not leave him alone. Then he turned to Elder Isidore for counsel. Elder Isidore replied, “Rest, Moses, and fret not against the demons, and seek not to make attacks upon them, for there is moderation in everything, even in ascetic labors.” Being zealous of spirit, Moses spoke, “But I believe in God, in whom I have placed my hope, that being armed I must not cease waging war against them until they depart from me.” The Elder then blessed him, “In the name of Jesus Christ, from this moment the demons shall cease from you. Come near and partake in Holy Communion and you will be free from all impurity both of the flesh and the spirit. This has happened so that you would not boast within yourself for conquering the demon of lust, but rather would give thanks to God who has made you free.”

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As Moses progressed in the spiritual life, many youths wishing to dedicate their lives to God gathered around him. Many of his former gang members and other outlaws renounced their ways and followed Moses, saying, “If he who was the baddest of all the bad has feared God, shouldn’t we?” Once a gang of four thieves attacked Moses’ dwelling, hoping to find something valuable. But in his great strength he tied them up with rope and carried them to the church. Once Moses had been a thief stealing sheep. Now he had become a shepherd, calling back the lost sheep.

Moses the Ethiopian was counted worthy of the priesthood, and abounded in God-given gifts. No fear could be found in his brave soul, for love casts out fear. Moses was truly a great Elder of the renowned desert of Scetis, and possessed true spiritual wisdom. Shortly before his departure from the earth he warned his disciples: “Soon a gang of murderers will come and take my life, so as to fulfill the truth that *he who lives by the sword will die by the sword*.”⁷⁴ Then a gang came and killed Elder Moses and almost all his disciples. One disciple hid in the trees and saw the souls of Moses and his disciples being freed from their bodies and attain eternal life.



Xenia the Homeless Wanderer

XENIA THE HOMELESS WANDERER

Xenia was born in Russia in the 18th century and lived a comfortable life. She married an imperial colonel named Andrei, and they were well off; she seemed to be happily married and completely devoted to her husband, who was a bit worldly. He was still young and in good health when he died suddenly one night at a drinking party.

The unexpected death of her beloved husband completely shattered her whole world. She was twenty-six years old and childless. The sorrowing widow looked around at all her possessions, at her pointless little world, and suddenly began to realize the vanity of this temporary life and its empty joys. To the utter amazement of her friends and relatives, Xenia began to give away all that she possessed. Her money and personal belongings she gave to the poor, and her house she gave away to a friend. Finally her relatives decided that she had taken complete leave of her senses and considered her mentally unbalanced.

Having realized that there can be no true happiness in this world and that possessions are only a hindrance to the attaining of true peace in God, she suddenly vanished for eight years. It was at this time that Xenia was called to the highest feat of spiritual perfection—that of “foolishness for Christ’s sake.”⁷⁵ A “fool for Christ” appears totally crazy according to the world’s standards, when in fact he or she has reached a high state of perfection that is beyond this world. In the “fool” there is a perfect understanding of life and death, good and evil, love and hate. There is complete reconciliation with God, while the world calls it madness.

Xenia returned to her home town dressed in her dead husband’s old uniform, and would only respond to his name. Up to her death people called her Andrei. It was as though she

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took upon herself a life of hidden virtue not only for herself, but for her husband who had died drunk. Sorrowing for his mistakes and her own imperfections, she began to wander the streets of the poorest area of St. Petersburg. Wherever she went people would persecute and laugh at her, and on some occasions throw rocks at her. Nevertheless, with total meekness and patience she kept before the eyes of her soul the image of Christ who suffered without a murmur, heard all accusations, bore all persecutions, and suffered torture and crucifixion. Because of God's example she endured all hardships with pleasure and silence, saying only, "God forgive them for they don't know what they are doing."

Those who felt sorry for Xenia would give her some spare change or some clothes, but she, in her selfless love for mankind, would turn around and give away all she had received, leaving nothing for herself. She found pleasure in her suffering, for in poverty she possessed the greatest wealth. Through her secret prayer-life she obtained the limitless treasure of communion with God. Thus she was given the gift of otherworldly insight. She could see the future as if it were the present, she could see into the hearts and thoughts of those that she met. Sometimes God would reveal to her the approach of someone's death, so she could warn them beforehand and death wouldn't catch them off guard.

Once Xenia was seen anxiously running through the cold snow-covered streets, loudly crying out, "Bake pancakes! Bake pancakes! Soon all of Russia will be baking pancakes!" Although it is a Russian custom to bake pancakes as a memorial for the dead, as usual no one could figure out the meaning of these strange words. Just days later the Empress was found dead; then they understood the strange words of the prophet Xenia.

People gradually began to accept her strange behavior as some sort of sign from God, and often her behavior would be strange indeed. Another time Xenia was seen weeping both day and night. When someone asked her why, she only replied,

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“There is blood! There is blood! There is a river of blood there!” And she began to weep all the more. No one could understand what was agitating the usually peaceful Xenia, and no one could understand the meaning of her frightening words. A few days later there was a bloody murder; her tears had borne witness to it before it even happened.

She possessed absolutely nothing except the rags on her back. Often upon arriving at the home of a friend she would cheerfully announce, “Here is all of me!” For a long time no one knew where Xenia would spend her nights. One night the local police followed her, and discovered that she would spend her nights in an open field, praying all through the night in any kind of weather.

Finally the time came when Xenia was no longer to be found either in the streets or in the field. Her radiant face shone no more amidst the slums and poor alleys of St. Petersburg. Thus another lover of truth lived and died for God while the world called it madness.



Monk Paisius Velichkovsky

MONK PAISIUS

Paisius Velichkovsky was born in a village in Russia in the 18th century. From his earliest youth Paisius loved purity and simplicity, and stood out from all the other children his age. From reading the lives of the Saints there began to be born in his soul a zeal for abandoning the world to become a monk.

As a teenager he was sent to Kiev to go to school, and there he continued reading and imitating the lives of Saints and lost interest in secular school altogether. Because he was entirely neglecting his studies, the superior of the school demanded an explanation. Paisius, who usually was meek and shy, replied boldly, saying:

The first reason is that I have the intention of becoming a monk, and realizing the uncertainty of the hour of death, I wish to become a monk as soon as possible. The second reason is that from outward learning I do not see any benefit for my soul, hearing only the names of pagan Gods and “wise men”.... Learning wisdom from them, people today have become completely blinded and have stepped away from the right path; they pronounce high-minded words, but within they are full of darkness and obscurity, and all their wisdom is only on their tongue. Seeing no benefit from such teachings and fearing lest I myself be corrupted by it, I have abandoned it.

Seeing that the young Paisius was immovable in his decision, the Superior punished him mercilessly.

Having such zeal to become a monk, he wept many tears and prayed to God, asking him to instruct him on the right path. Then his soul was set on fire with the love of pilgrimage. He left the school and the city and wandered, sad of soul, like a poor stranger, seeking his heavenly homeland. Walking from

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monastery to monastery and conversing with holy elders and monks he then resolved to enter a monastery.

He soon realized that it wasn't the right one for him, since it had grown corrupt with hypocrisy, and he desired the pure essence of an uncorrupted, unhypocritical monastic life. So he continued his search for a monastery and a spiritual director that would teach him how to purify his soul. Again he wandered without success, sad of heart, but at least he was now a monk.

In his searching and wandering, he heard of his mother's deep sorrow over his becoming a monk. She wouldn't eat or sleep, and only lamented night and day, destroying her own life. Then a voice came to her and said: "O miserable one! What have you done? Rather than love the Lord your Creator with all your heart and soul, you have loved his creation, your son, more than your Creator; and for the sake of your senseless and God-denying love you have chosen to kill yourself by hunger, and for this to fall into eternal condemnation. You should imitate your son and also renounce the world and everything in the world and become a nun. Such is the will of God." She immediately went to a women's monastery and was tonsured a nun, soon to die with peace of soul.

Wandering in search of a spiritual father who could teach him about the unseen spiritual life, he traveled throughout southern Russia and Wallachia. He ended up in Mount Athos Greece, the small secluded republic of monks that is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea. Mount Athos, the sacred land of many monasteries, proved a good place to find his spiritual consolation. He desired a spiritual father advanced in monastic life, who was well-versed in the Scriptures and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and who was living alone in silence and poverty, to whom he might give himself in obedience for the benefit of the soul. But still he was all alone.

Finding a little cell to dwell in, he began a severe life of deprivations in fasting, hunger, thirst, prayer, and tears. He underwent many trials of suffering in soul and body. As for



One of the twenty monasteries on Mount Athos, Greece,
as it looks today.

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fasting, he ate only dry bread with water every other day. His poverty was extreme; he did not possess even one clean robe, but wore the same dirty, patched one every day.

In his love for the truth he copied by hand many of the books of the Holy Fathers on spiritual life. When copying the books, he would deliberately work standing at a lectern, in order to keep from dozing off and losing concentration. In this way he developed a deep understanding of the spiritual life. Still fatherless, he began to realize that the spiritual father he was seeking was actually found; he had found him in the Saints of old through their writings.

After some time had passed in this way, there came to Paisius in his seclusion a certain young monk named Bessarion, who desired to live with him and sought his counsel in the spiritual life. Paisius replied to him,

Brother! You compel me to say something sad and I renew the pain in my own heart; because I also, with much effort and sorrow, sought an instructor and did not find one. When Christ was led into the desert, he repelled Satan by means of fasting, humility, poverty, vigil and prayer; and by opposing him with the divine Scriptures; and he gave the crown of this victory upon the head of our nature, thus teaching us how and giving us power to conquer him. Wherefore he who follows his Lord by means of these, with humility and love, and accepts from Him the mission to treat other souls and instruct them in His commandments, receives also from the Lord, because of his humility, the power to conquer all the passions.

Monk Paisius made it clear that since he couldn't find any experienced instructors in the spiritual life, he should seek Christ, the greatest of spiritual teachers—God Himself.

The young monks Paisius and Bessarion lived and grew together, having oneness of soul in all things. They set themselves a rule of being obedient to each other in everything, so

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that they could learn to cut off their own wills and so attain the will of God alone.

But not for long did they live such a quiet life, sweet in God and consoling to the soul. Other brothers began to come to them from the world, seeking an unhypocritical monastery with a true common life. Thus in the desert there arose a city, a community of monks who chose Monk Paisius as their instructor. At one time Paisius had sought an instructor in spiritual life, but now he himself became an instructor guiding and protecting his group of monks.

Due to the large number of brothers that gathered around Monk Paisius, he decided to start another monastery in Romania. Taking some of his disciples, he settled in a secluded wilderness in Moldavia, northern Romania.

As this new monastery grew, the selfless labor of Paisius increased. He would spend his nights in prayer, weeping and praying for his spiritual children and copying the writings of the Holy Fathers by hand. With more monks, more rare spiritual texts were copied out by the brothers who were skilled in calligraphy. It was because of these selfless labors of Monk Paisius that the world was given the famous collection of writings on the spiritual life called the *Philokalia* (The love of good).

As he continued in his usual labors, the separation of soul and body drew near. The day of his death was revealed to him, and thus he began to prepare to leave this world and enter the next. He died in old age, having lived a God-pleasing life of prayer, silence and labor. All his monks felt both joy and sorrow at his departure, for they knew that he was a Saint of God, but also felt orphaned. Thus ended the life of another lover of truth, who because of this love never truly died but lives on.



Monk Herman portrayed with the chains and iron cross which he wore.

MONK HERMAN

In 18th-century Russia there lived a young boy named Herman who desired a life in God more than anything in this temporary world. This young determined boy, at the age of twelve entered a monastery. The spiritual father of the monks was the well-known Elder Theodore of Sanaxar, a friend of the Monk Paisius.

One day some people were in the woods gathering mushrooms when they stumbled upon a small hut. From the hut emerged a little boy—at such a young age Herman was living in the deserted wilderness of Russia. With his whole being Herman loved the silent wilderness, for it was there that he found God.

While still very young, Herman came close to death from a dangerous, painful infection. In a wretched condition, expecting to die, he did not go to an earthly doctor, but locked himself in his cell and with deep prayer and tears begged for healing. After praying the entire night he collapsed with exhaustion and slept on the floor. When he awoke in the morning, he found himself in perfect health. This visitation of God he treasured for the rest of his life.

After many years in the simple monastic life, Monk Herman moved to the great and famous monastery of Valaam, located on an island in a lake. At that time the abbot of Valaam was the righteous Elder Nazarius. He instructed Herman in the spiritual life and embraced him as a father would his son. Nazarius would tell the young Herman:

A monk must unfailingly be a doer of all the Lord's commandments, an emulator of the state and order of the angels, a knower of God, and have love towards Him and his neighbor.

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A monk must in everything hold to God's words, and not in the least attend to the voice of vice.

A monk must have his mind illumined from above, his body undefiled, his mouth inclined to silence, his tongue pure.

A monk must have the remembrance of death, estrangement from the world. Such is what a monk should be; and such is the foundation he should place for the fulfilling of his vows, so that he may offer to God not only gifts of visible labors, but also sacrifices of soul and spirit.⁷⁷

Nazarius' counsels and fatherly love filled the young Monk Herman with a burning zeal; and seeing this, Nazarius let him live alone in the wilderness. This path of reclusion and detachment from the world is only for a few select monks who are able to endure such a difficult, lonely life. Monk Herman was one of those few.

After much labor and struggle in solitude, his life of seclusion came to an end when Elder Nazarius asked him if he would volunteer to go to a faraway land to do missionary work. Along with seven other monks, he volunteered to undertake the self-sacrificing work of leaving his homeland to help a suffering people of another land. They were going to America.

In 1794 the small group of monks arrived in the northwestern part of America, called Alaska. After struggling for their lives in the Siberian wilderness and surviving the dangerous sea voyage, they set out on their missionary journeys and traveled throughout Alaska. They would learn customs and languages of the natives and live among them, not setting themselves above them.

Since many of the native tribes were extremely violent the monks taught the natives peace and compassion. They taught them the long-awaited truth of Christ, which the native people embraced without hesitation. They accepted Christ so naturally because they had been waiting for the revelation of the fullness of the truth, which was yet to be manifest on earth. They recognized this truth in Christ.



Elder Nazarius of Valaam, the spiritual father of Monk Herman.
On the scroll he is holding are these words:

*Humility is power
And patience is defense,
While love is protection;
And where there is love there is God;
And where there is God
There is all goodness.*

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As the other monks continued their travels, Monk Herman settled on a little island near Kodiak called Spruce Island. He began to live as he had in the wilderness in his native Russia, as a desert dweller. Monk Herman found a suitable place in the mossy forest, and built an earthen dwelling using the native *barabara*⁷⁸ as his model. He called his new home “New Valaam” after his monastery back in his native land, for he missed his home very much.

There in the woods, all, all alone on the little island, he prayed, fasted, and lived in peace and silence. He lived in his own world of Saints and angels and wept many tears of love for God. The natives, seeing his selfless and God-bearing way of life, grew to love him very much and would come to him to visit and hear his stories of Russia and the lives of the Saints and righteous ones.

In Alaska at this time, many Russians came and settled with the intention of making money off the natives. These settlers, greedy and violent, saw Monk Herman as an obstacle and decided to torment him. They often harassed him for defending the natives and setting the example of a godly life. They made many attempts to scare him away, but knowing that he was needed, he endured it all with noble courage.

Herman saw that there were many orphaned and illegitimate children among the natives, so he began to bring them to his deserted island to take care of them as a true father. He was careful to feed both their bodies and souls—thus he would bake them pretzels and salmon pies, and would raise them with the knowledge of God. He was their only protector.

In a letter to Sergius Yanovsky, the governor of the Russian Colonies that were treating the natives so terribly, Monk Herman wrote:

I, the most humble servant of the local peoples, stand before you with bloody tears and write my request: Be a father and a protector for us! Wipe away the tears of de-



Monk Herman next to his half-earthen dwelling on Spruce Island.

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fenseless orphans, cool the heat of sorrow in melting hearts,
give us to know the meaning of consolation.

Monk Herman lived a totally selfless life, not only raising orphans, but also keeping to his monastic rules of fasting, prayer, and silence. He wore the same clothes winter and summer, enduring the harsh extremes of nature. He wore only a deerskin vest over his robe, not taking it off or changing it for eight years.

He slept in a coffin so that he would always be reminded of death, and used two rocks for pillows that were hidden under a deerskin, thus unnoticed by visitors. He ate very little and wore out his body by his austere way of life, and he rejected all the comforts of this world which distract one's attention from God. To quiet the movements of the flesh and to take on himself more suffering, he wore fifteen pounds of chain with a heavy metal cross attached to it. No one saw the chains during his life because he hid them under his clothes—it was his secret with God.

Most of his time was spent in his little cabin praying in silence as a monk does. Once someone asked him: "How do you manage to live alone in the forest; don't you get bored?" To this the Elder replied:

No, I'm not alone here. There is God, and God is everywhere! There are holy angels! How can one be bored with them? With whom is it more pleasant and better to converse, with angels or people? Angels, of course!

Sergius Yanovsky who was the governor of the Russian Colonies, began coming to Elder Herman in order to converse with him. Concerning his talks with the monk, Sergius writes:

I was well educated, knowing many sciences, and had read much. But the law of God I hardly understood. I was a free-thinker, a deist. When I talked with Herman, to my amazement he spoke so powerfully, so sensibly, that it seems to me that no education and earthly wisdom could withstand

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his words. We talked about the love of God, about eternity, about the salvation of the soul, and about Christian life. I was thus changed and converted onto the path of truth.

Later in his life this same Sergius became a monk, and lead three of his daughters and his son to the monastic life as well.

Once the Elder was invited onto a boat that had come from St. Petersburg. On board was the captain and some twenty-five officers, all well-educated men sent by Imperial command. Amidst them sat this monk of small stature, in an old garment, who by his wise conversation brought all his listeners to such a state that they didn't know how to answer him.

Monk Herman asked them all one question: "What do you, gentlemen, love above all, and what would each of you wish for his happiness?" One desired wealth, one glory, one a beautiful wife. "Is it not true," said the Elder, "that all your various desires can be reduced to this—that each of you desires that which in his understanding he considers best and most worthy of love?" "Yes, it is so," they all replied. The Elder then said:

Well, then, tell me, can there be anything better, higher, above everything, more surpassing everything, and in general more worthy of love, than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who created us, adorned us with such perfections, gave life to all, supports all, nourishes and loves all, who Himself is Love and more excellent than all men? Shouldn't we then love God above all, and more than all desire and seek Him?

They answered, "Well, yes! That is understood! That speaks for itself!" The Elder then asked, "And do you love God?" All replied: "Of course, we love God. How can one not love God?" Then Monk Herman said, "And I, sinful one, for more than forty years have been striving to love God, and cannot say that I perfectly love Him." And he began to tell them how one should love God:



Young Priest-monk Gerasim, the one who followed in Monk Herman's footsteps on Spruce Island, thus fulfilling his prophecy.

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If we love someone we always think of him, strive to please him, day and night our heart is occupied with this person. Is it thus that you, gentlemen, love God? Do you often turn to Him, do you always think of Him, do you always pray to Him and fulfill His holy commandments?

For our good, for our happiness, at least let us make a promise to ourselves, that from this day, from this hour, from this minute we shall strive to love God above all, and fulfill His holy will!⁸⁴

There were cases when Monk Herman spoke prophetically. On one occasion the Elder Herman said that one day a monk like himself, fleeing worldly glory, would settle on Spruce Island. His prophecy was fulfilled when a Priest-Monk named Gerasim moved to the abandoned wilderness of monk Herman's "New Valaam." This monk, following Orthodox custom, dug up Elder Herman's coffin, placed his bones in a new coffin and put them in a little Church as a remembrance of the nearness of the saints in the other world.

Without the slightest fear of those in power, Monk Herman worked for God with all his zeal until death. Just before dying, he said to one of his orphans prophetically, "On this place there will be a monastery in time." At the time, his statement seemed obscure since he lived on a desert island, but a hundred and fifty years later his prophecy proved true, for a monastery was established on his Spruce Island, at Monks Lagoon, to fulfill his wish.

Then the time approached for Monk Herman to leave this world. He asked one of his orphans to light a candle and read from the Holy Scriptures, from the Acts of the Apostles, as he lay on his deathbed. Through the tears in their eyes his beloved orphans gazed on their father's face that was gently shining in the darkness of the night....



Elder Michael

ELDER MICHAEL

Michael was born in 1877 in the country of Latvia. Hardly had he reached one and half years of age when his mother died, and when he was six years old his father died also. He lived a sorrowful life as an orphan, and thus his childhood was not worth remembering. Later he would never talk about it, and thus there is little known.

In his teens he made the decision to abandon the world and become a monk, yet it took a while for him to act on his resolve. His relatives tried to talk him out of it, telling him to get a job and make a successful materialistic life for himself.

In the factory where Michael worked, an incident occurred that moved him to his core with the thought of sudden death. A mechanic, wanting to stop a certain machine, got too close. A part of his jacket caught in the machine, and in a minute there was nothing left of him. The constant closeness of death brought him to the resolve of becoming a monk.

It was the third day after Easter, when—quietly, without saying anything to anyone—Michael took a little bundle on his shoulders and silently left home. In his bundle there was a Holy Bible and two changes of clothes. He was only eighteen.

Feeding himself on what God sent, sleeping in the forest under the open sky, abandoning all earthly care, Michael walked with prayer on his lips to many monasteries, seeking the will of God about himself. Then the thought came to his mind: “Be firm in defense of pure Orthodoxy. You will have to endure much, but stay firm, even unto death.”

In 1902 Michael abandoned the world forever. He entered the Valaam Monastery. There behind the ancient stone walls of the monastery he lived for many years in silence and peace, communing with his own heart. But his peace was disturbed, for in Russia in 1917 there was unleashed a bloody persecution

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that the world would never recover from. A government based on atheism called communism was instituted and believers were being slaughtered by the thousands. Knowing that the “arena” and the catacomb church of persecution never ended Monk Michael shed innumerable tears over all the blood that was spilt.

Then one day in the dead of winter a man was seen running across the frozen lake towards the monastery. He proceeded to warn the monks that the communist soldiers were approaching the monastery. The monks quickly loaded all the monastery possessions on sleds and horses and began the sorrowful walk across the frozen lake towards the free country of Finland. At that time there was about three hundred monks in Valaam monastery. Since the monks were nearly freezing to death they decided to make a bon fire. As the fire burned the monks stood there looking from a distance at the their beloved monastery with great sorrow. As the tears streamed down their faces they froze in the winter cold.

Eventually the monks made it safely to the persecution-free country of Finland and created a new monastery out of nothing. Then during these difficult and dark times there also arose a persecution in his own monastery. There arose a movement to “reform” the ancient tradition of Orthodoxy and to make it conform to the fashions of this fallen world. All those who were against the “system” and its conformity were mercilessly persecuted. Monk Michael recalled his resolve to “be firm in defense of pure Orthodoxy” and suffered much persecution.

Monk Michael was put on trial for his faithfulness to the purity of true Orthodoxy, and in the midst of the trial he said: “You can bury me alive but I will not step away from the testament which I have been given.” After his trial he was banished to a deserted island.

In 1957 Michael was forced to leave the Monastery because of the persecution, and with much sorrow he moved to Pskov Caves Monastery on the border of the soviet union. Elder



The main church of Valaam Monastery, Russia.

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Michael lived out his final years in total silence and seclusion, living for prayer alone.

The following are accounts of meetings, talks and conversations with the Elder in the years before his death. His talks seem to open up the other world.



His astonishing eyes, bright and clear, looked at me. I realized at once that Fr. Michael read my thoughts and knew my past. "Father," I asked him, "what do you think of death?" The elder answered:

There is no death. There is merely a passing from one state to another. To me personally, the life of the other world is much more real than my life here.

The more the Christian lives the interior life, the more he is detached from this world, and imperceptibly he approaches the other world. When the end comes it is easy; the thin curtain simply dissolves.

The mystery of sin is in operation from a long time ago, but rather I think the time is now pointing in another direction. Indeed, how many martyrs have we had recently and have even now. It shows how many saints are still living. At the end of time there will be no martyrs because Apostasy will be so vile.

"Is the interior life very difficult?" I asked the elder.

No, if you take it in the right way. In the interior life there is no straight line. A person either ascends or descends. No one who looks for comfort can expect to attain interior peace. He does not even know what it is. In the world there are many people who are merely walking corpses, thinking nothing except about their comfort. When we are young or even middle-aged, we can hide our true self. An old person cannot do this. Often the revelation of a person's true self is appalling.



A young monk in the wilderness of Valaam.

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It is important to avoid the same falls whatever they may be: drinking, gambling, impurity, and so on. After every fall our repentance weakens. We become accustomed to our sins and in the end Divine Grace produces no impression on us, and we become, first, indifferent to Christian life, and then violently hostile to God. When a man reaches this stage, he loses the capacity to recognize his fault and becomes reprobate. On the other hand, those who truly feel sorry, even if they fall again and again into the same sin, begin first to feel indifferent towards it and then hate it. Gradually all sins become disgusting to them and they become Saints of God. Everyone is free to select the first or the second way. Those who select the right way must remember that the earlier one starts, the better it is. It is difficult to break up former habits. Criminals and murderers were not born as such. They were no different from anybody else, but they neglected to regret small sins and ended up as reprobates.

Elder Michael once gave me a piece of paper that said the following: "Happiness and misfortune, rise and fall, health and sickness, glory and dishonor, wealth and poverty; everything comes from God and must be accepted as such."

I looked at the Elder. "This is a hard saying, Father." The Elder answered:

No, many people struck by misfortune become either depressed, considering everything lost, or rebellious, believing that they suffer unjustly. The truth, of course, is that God bends us all His own way, which is the best for those concerned.

We have merely a dead faith. This is common to the devils. They know there is a God, but they oppose Him nevertheless. Remember always that all troubles in this life are designed to make us more detached from this world. Therefore they lead us to a better life.

You see, while we have no peace of mind we cannot see God. We are able to understand the past within the limits allowed by God, but we do not know what to do now and

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what to plan for the future. If we have no peace of soul, it means that inwardly we have still not reached a state of wholeness and are blinded with passions which prevent us from seeing the world in its true light. But when we attain an inward peace, our passions are mastered and we clearly see who we are and where we are going. You see, it is impossible to be a good servant of God and to labor in His vineyard in whatever capacity with any success unless inner peace is attained first. People value this peace above all else, but it is obvious that they cannot obtain it from those who do not have it themselves. So many sermons, books, exercises, produce no effect because they are not born out of inner peace, in contemplation and detachment. But when you attain inward peace everything is all right because God is with you. Only in deep inward peace can we see God and understand His Will.

“What helps, Father,” I asked the recluse, “to obtain inward peace?” Elder Michael replied:

Patient enduring of sorrows and pure prayer.



New Martyr Hierotheus beside the body of his friend
Monk Seraphim.

NEW MARTYRS HIEROTHEUS AND SERAPHIM

The following account is the life and sufferings of a monk named Seraphim and his close friend, Bishop Hierotheus. They lived in the bloody time, when the Russian nation took on itself the destructive atheistic government of communism. Over sixty million innocent people were slaughtered for their belief in the living God. All Christians were called “enemies of the people” and were exterminated. But the Church persecuted from the time of Christ lived on, and continues even to the present day.

Seraphim was born in 1897. Strange to say, his upbringing and family were very similar to the “Karamazovs” of the famous Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s, novel. The father of the family, who from childhood had led a loose life, was light-minded, and his wife was constantly at war with him. This created unpleasant scenes which made the home atmosphere depressing.

This made a great impression on the frail sensitive boy Seraphim. He realized that his father lived at the mercy of his passions. Seraphim did not wish to be like this, and therefore he began to develop his power of will. He began to study yoga which left him empty. And then he began to read the teachings of the Holy Fathers which inspired him to undertake an austere way of life. He started to sleep on the bare floor, and made frequent pilgrimages to Valaam Monastery in order to inspire his longing soul.

The whirlwind of the revolution scattered the members of his family. At this time Seraphim met his future close friend, the young Bishop Hierotheus. The bishop ordained Seraphim a priest, and he began his short life in the service of God. Mean-

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while the revolution was raging, and believers, priests, monks, and bishops were being exterminated.

On his way to visit someone, Seraphim was arrested as an “enemy of the people,” and suffered the usual tortures inflicted on believers by the atheist power. Because of the torture, his health broke down and he developed tuberculosis. He was finally released from prison to “die at home,” which in fact happened very soon. Just before he died, his close friend Bishop Hierotheus tonsured him a monk into the great skema, which is the last stage on the monastic ladder of ascent to perfection. He was only twenty-six years old when he died. A relative of his described him: “He had beautiful, dark blue eyes, and there was something in him not of this world.”

Skema-monk Seraphim’s close friend, the monk and bishop Hierotheus, was the very first martyr of the Russian Catacomb Church to die directly for the purity and freedom of Christ’s Church.

Bishop Hierotheus was much loved and very popular among the believers. His outspokenness and his refusal to submit to the godless authorities led him to his martyr’s crown. In May, 1928, a friend betrayed him and revealed his whereabouts to the authorities. When the Soviets came to arrest him, people gathered in great numbers and would not allow him to be taken. Without hesitation, the authorities shot him in the head and killed him. Thus, the recent persecution of lovers of truth was kicked off with a bang.

THE SIXTY PRIEST-MARTYRS

The following is a first-hand account of how believers in the face of the atheist authorities stood immovably in their faith before the face of death. Here are the words of the witness:

“In the 1930’s I traveled through the whole of Siberia on a scientific expedition. The road we were on was completely in

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the middle of nowhere, there were no inhabitants, only prisoners. In the camps round that area there reigned an unheard-of tyranny. For no reason at all people were shot, beaten, and flogged. It was the time of communism in Russia—the atheistic state.

“Living conditions in the camps were terrible, there were sixty to eighty people in the barracks, with two layers of boards for sleeping. In case one of the prisoners didn’t fulfill his daily assignment, the camp guards had the right to do what they wanted with them. People were dying of hunger and cold.

“It was a clear, quiet night. As long as I live I will never forget this valley. I will remember it always! Our sweet morning sleep was interrupted by a kind of mournful human moan. We all got up quickly. We saw a crowd moving in our direction; because of the undergrowth it was difficult to see what was going on.

“It was sixty prisoners, and as they got closer we could see clearly that they were all wasted from starvation and overwork. Each of them had a rope on his shoulders. They were dragging a sleigh—a sleigh in the month of July! And on the sleigh was a barrel of human excrement.

“We heard the precise words of the guards’ command: ‘Lie down and don’t move.’ Already a ditch had been prepared for them. The sixty martyrs were priests. In the quiet of the July morning, the weak voices of many of the priests were clearly audible. One of the executioners asked the priests standing by the ditch, one by one: ‘You’re taking your last breath; tell us, is there a God or not?’ The reply of the Martyrs was firm and confident: ‘Yes, there is a God!’

“The first shot rang out. Sitting in the tents, our hearts pounded.... A second shot rang out, a third, and more. The priests were led up one by one to the ditch; the executioners standing by the ditch asked each priest—Is there a God? The answer was the same: Yes, there is a God!”



Priest-monk Gabriel with the nuns of the convent where he is the spiritual father.

PRIEST-MONK GABRIEL

Gabriel was born near the Black Sea in the country of Georgia, which until not long ago was under the oppression of the atheistic authority of communism. The following account is of Monk Gabriel's persecution for the truth, which took place during this century, in our own times.

It all happened the year Stalin died. Gabriel was a young priest-monk. There was a rally in the central square of Tbilisi (the capital of Georgia), and the government speakers were standing there. Behind them, on the side of the building, there always hung posters of the party leaders in full figure, two stories high. At the peak of the rally, when the entire square was packed with people and a member of the government was giving a speech, suddenly the gigantic portrait of Stalin burst into flames. Monk Gabriel had gained entrance into the upper floor of the government building, opened a window and poured kerosene on the back of the portraits, and then set them on fire. Lenin's portrait also burned immediately. Horror came over the square: they all froze with fear, and everything became still. While the pictures of the leaders were in flames, from the second-floor window Father Gabriel gave this speech:

The Lord said, Thou shalt not make unto thee idols or any graven images....Thou shalt have no other gods! People, come to your senses! The people of this land have always been Christians. So why are you bowing down before idols? Jesus Christ died and on the third day rose again.... But your cast idols will never be resurrected. Even during their lifetime they were dead....

It is impossible to imagine how they could have let him utter another phrase!

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The doors of the government building had been locked; he had entered the attic earlier and sat there until the rally began. They brought him down, it is true, quick enough: they brought in some fire trucks and raised ladders.

When they brought him down the crowd fell on him, breaking through all the barricades.... They kicked him, hit him with rifles, flailed him with fire hoses. They screamed: "Let me finish off that louse!" Each person wanted to trample "the enemy of the people" underfoot with their shoes, to express their zeal. The firemen dragged him away.

The reason they didn't shoot him is that they carried him off like a corpse. His face couldn't be recognized; he was one bloody mess. His skull was fractured, and there were seventeen fractured bones in his body. He lay almost unconscious for a month. The entire time he was at death's door, but he didn't die. When after several years he was released, it was fortunate that he had a mother. Both of them lived together and he was certified as a lunatic. No one would let him into their home to earn a little money; everywhere people knew him and were afraid of him. Neither he nor his mother could appear outside in the daylight; if they did, the neighbors would set their dogs on them. For several years he could be seen on the steps of a church with an outstretched hand.

Gabriel spent many years in this way, being rejected, abandoned, and hated but through all he never forgot his ideal. He would seclude himself in a small hole that he dug out of the side of a cliff and would often pray unto tears. If it were not for his undying love for God he would have gone mad. Years after his burning of the atheist portraits when Elder Gabriel was asked about his demonstration of burning the "idols" he answered the following:

They erected an idol and wanted people to bow down before this idol. This is a type of the Antichrist, an image of a man, or rather a beast, and they wanted to give him the

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honor that belongs to God alone. I could not allow this to continue.

After the time of the persecution of believers came to a close and the desire for spiritual answers to this bloody world arose in peoples hearts, many began to come to the Priest-monk Gabriel for spiritual direction. He then became the elder and spiritual father to many people including an entire monastery of nuns. All the suffering that he lived through and endured with love opened the other world to him. Through his suffering for the truth, the God of truth came near to him and the spiritual realm was opened to him. The following is a few words of Elder Gabriel that reveal the intensity of his life of suffering and his self-sacrificing love for the truth.

Everything bad in man is only accidental. Don't despise anyone, even if you see such people: frightening, filthy, drunk and swearing with foul language. God's image is preserved even in them, at a deep level of which, perhaps, they themselves are unaware. It is simply that the enemy defiles this image and covers it with filth.

It is difficult to see God's image in those who revile you, who appear in the image of a beast. But one must pity them even more because their souls are contorted, perhaps beyond repair, unto eternal torment.... How difficult this is, to love one's enemies.

Elder Gabriel suffered very much for the faith and continues to suffer as a rare example of standing for the truth whatever the cost.



Archbishop John

ARCHBISHOP JOHN

John was born in 1896 in a village in southern Russia. During the revolutionary years, John and his family evacuated to Serbia. He was tonsured a monk and soon afterwards was ordained a priest.

People began to notice that he stayed up late at night after everyone else was asleep. Then it was discovered that he scarcely slept at all, and never in a bed, allowing himself only an hour or two each night of uncomfortable rest in a sitting position, or bent over on the floor in prayer. Years later he himself admitted that since the time he became a monk he had not slept lying in a bed.

At the age of thirty-eight Monk John was made bishop, a successor to the Apostles; and was sent to Shanghai, China, in order to help the suffering people there. Seeing in Shanghai many homeless children, he started an orphanage with very little resources. He would gather the sick and starving children off the streets, dark alleys, and slums of Shanghai and would feed them, clothe them, and give them love.

In the slums of Shanghai, there were cases in which dogs would devour babies who had been thrown into garbage cans. One time when John was going out to find suffering children, he bought a bottle of liquor and proceeded to fearlessly walk the dangerous streets of the slums. The person with him was totally baffled as to why John, a monk, would buy a bottle of liquor. He stopped in front of a trash can, looked inside, and found a newborn child crying in the garbage. As he reached for it, he heard a voice from a dark corner of a building, growling. John went towards the figure and offered the bottle of liquor in exchange for the child. That night he returned to the orphanage with two babies under his arms.

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John gave his life for the sorrowful and outcast youth to such an extent that some said that he crucified himself for his orphans. Once a young boy arrived at the orphanage from out of nowhere. The child had witnessed his father and mother being killed and chopped into pieces by atheists right in front of his own eyes. Because of the trauma the boy couldn't speak at all. He was like a trapped animal, afraid of everyone and trusted only his fists. When John arrived, he sat down before the boy who was still trembling and said to him, "I know that you have lost your father, but now you have found one—me," and he hugged him. This was said with such power that the boy burst into tears and began to speak.

Once, in the middle of the night, one of the women that helped John with the orphans decided to go up into the bell tower. It was cold and windy. As she opened the door she saw John in deep, concentrated prayer, freezing, shivering in the storm. He was suffering in prayer for his orphans and for the terrible state of the whole world while the world was asleep.

After many years of suffering with the suffering people of China Archbishop John was asked to move to California to build an Orthodox church there. With much difficulty he arranged that all of his orphans join him in San Francisco.

It soon became apparent that the core of his asceticism was prayer and fasting. He ate only once a day at about 11 p.m., and at times wouldn't eat for an entire week. His nights were usually spent in prayer, and when exhausted he would collapse on the floor and steal a few hours of sleep. When it was time to get up someone would tap him on the shoulder, and he would jump up and be seen in a few minutes, cold water streaming down his beard, but quite awake.

Despite the disapproval of the "important" figures of the church John was often seen playing with children. He seemed to like being with children more than with "important" church figures. In short, he was not concerned with what people thought of him. He walked barefoot in rain and snow, paid no attention to his long gray hair that was always messy, and had

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no concern for his outward appearance. All that mattered to him was the inward world.

Archbishop John would often do things that seemed crazy in the eyes of the world. He didn't care what people thought of him but lived as though he was not of this world. Once while traveling through Europe he walked straight into a busy street and began to chant the ancient memorial service for the dead. While the people that he was with stood baffled, the police arrived and stopped traffic for him so he could continue the service. Afterwards he was asked why he did such a crazy thing, and he replied that on that spot in the street a man had been killed and he wanted to pray there for his soul.

Since John's thoughts were in the other world, he appeared foolish and even crazy to those whose hearts were limited to this world. Due to his self-sacrificing prayer and love for God and humanity, he received the gift of being able to see into people's hearts. Often he would answer a question before it was even asked. He could also feel someone's need, sometimes from great distances, and would unexpectedly fulfill it, shocking everyone.

One time in Shanghai during the war, a woman who was very close to John was dying. It was about 10 or 11 at night, and there was a storm outside with wind and rain. In agony she cried out for John to come and help her in her dying state. The doctors came to the woman and told her that it was out of the question, as it was wartime and the hospital was locked for the night. Nevertheless she continued to cry out for John, but no one could tell him of her wish.

Then in the quiet of the night, as the storm raged on outside, in the open door of the ward appeared John, all wet, and approached his dying friend. Since his arrival was something in the nature of a miracle, she began to make sure that he was real. He smiled and quietly said, "I'm real." The woman then fell asleep.

Eighteen hours later she awoke feeling well, and attributed this to John's late-night appearance. No one believed her,



Archbishop John walking through a graveyard in New York
with two other monks.

saying that he couldn't possibly have entered the locked hospital on such a night. She then asked the sick person in the bed next to her if she had seen him, and she confirmed his appearance.

Another miraculous visit occurred while he was in France. Before his unexpected arrival, his friend was looking out of the window, and saw a strange object in front of her door that looked like a piece of pipe. As she was walking out the door to see what the object was, the door-bell rang and there stood John.

He walked in and proceeded through the corridor, not saying a word. Then he sat down in an armchair. He was silent

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and she was silent, not knowing what to say. After sitting for about five minutes, he got up and left. She stood there perplexed, wondering what was the meaning of all that.

Then her attention was again drawn to the front window, where outside a truck had pulled up and a group of policemen were at work. Some men very carefully picked up the pipe, put it in the truck, and cautiously departed.

At that time in Paris there were many terrorist bombings, and that object was one of the bombs. After the woman went outside and discovered this, she understood John's mysterious visit—his silent action to save her life. God had revealed it to him.

When Archbishop John was in his old age an incident occurred that revealed his inward world. In order to secretly go within his hidden world in communion with God, Archbishop John would shut the altar door in the church and spend hours there alone in prayer. Once one of the men of his church saw that the altar door was open and decided to ask John a question. As he peeked in the altar area he was overcome with fear. He saw before him the little old man of God in the dark surrounded in light that was not of this world, and his feet were not touching the ground. He saw John in uncreated light which is a vision of the world to come—Heaven.

Incidents such as these are innumerable: his tears in prayer, his saving of lives, his hard-core ascetic life and his undying love for truth. He left this world in 1966 and his body, flesh, hair and bones, without any human means of preservation, are totally intact. Through his suffering he reached a high degree of purity and righteousness, to such an extent that not only did his soul attain to incorruption, but so also did his body.



Monk Seraphim Rose

MONK SERAPHIM ROSE

Seraphim was born into a typical white, middle-class, American family in San Diego in 1934. After high school he began to search for the truth, and not finding it in the society in which he had been raised, he began to rebel.

He had rejected the “Christianity” of America, which he regarded as worldly, weak and fake, for to him it seemed that they put God in a box. So he turned to the writings of the mad prophet Nietzsche, until his words began to resonate in his soul with infernal power. He then fell into total despair, which he described in later years as a living hell. He felt that he didn’t fit into the modern world, or even into his own family, who did not understand him. It was as if he was somehow born in the wrong place and time. He loved to roam under the stars, but he felt there was nothing out there to take him in—no God, nothing. So he started drinking to ease the pain. Seraphim began to follow in the footsteps of a man he once met named Jack Kerouac, one of the founders of the “beat generation.” Seraphim would get totally drunk and would pound on the floor, screaming at God to leave him alone. Once while drunk on the top of a mountain he raised his fist to heaven, cursed God and dared Him to damn him to hell. In his despair, it seemed worth being damned forever, if only he could know that God exists, rather than remain in a state of indifference. If God did damn him to hell, at least then he would, for that blissful moment, feel God’s touch and know for sure that He was reachable.

In later years Seraphim wrote:

Atheism, true ‘existential’ atheism, burning with hatred of a seemingly unjust or unmerciful God, is a spiritual state; it is a real attempt to grapple with the true God whose ways



Seraphim before becoming a monk.

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are so inexplicable even to the most believing of men, and it has more than once been known to end in a blinding vision of Him Whom the real atheist truly seeks. It is Christ who works in these souls. The Antichrist is not to be found in the great deniers, but in the small affirmers, whose Christ is only on the lips. Nietzsche, in calling himself antichrist, proved thereby his intense hunger for Christ....

Seraphim started studying under one of the 50's and 60's counter-culture founders, Alan Watts, and became a Buddhist "bohemian" in San Francisco. He became fluent in Chinese in order to study the *Tao Teh Ching* and other ancient Eastern texts in their original language, hoping to tap into the heart of their wisdom. But he still didn't find the fullness of the truth that he suffered for. But he found that the Buddhist "nothingness" left him empty.

Seraphim had been seeking the truth with his mind, but it eluded him. In searching through various ancient religious traditions, he once visited an Eastern Orthodox Christian church. Later he wrote about his experience:

For years in my studies I was satisfied with being "above all traditions" but somehow faithful to them.... When I visited an Orthodox church for the first time, something happened to me that I had not experienced in any Buddhist or other Eastern temple; something in my heart said that I was home; that my search was over. I didn't really know what this meant.... With my exposure to Orthodoxy and to Orthodox people, a new idea began to enter my awareness: that truth was not just an abstract idea, sought and known by the mind, but was something personal—even a Person, sought and loved by the heart. And that is how I met Christ.

On becoming an Orthodox Christian, Seraphim continued to despise the modern world and hoped for nothing from it; he sought only to escape it. He desired an ascetic faith that didn't seek earthly desires and comforts, but rather redemption through intense suffering on earth.

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In his journal Seraphim wrote:

Let us not, who would be Christians, expect anything else from it than to be crucified. And we must be crucified outwardly, in the eyes of the world; for Christ's Kingdom is not of this world, and the world cannot bear it, even for a single moment. The world can only accept antichrist, now or at any time.

Before Seraphim had found the truth he suffered for the lack of it. Now having found it, he suffered for the sake of it. He devoted the rest of his life to living this truth and killing himself to give it to others. Together with a young Russian man named Herman, he formed a Brotherhood named after Saint Herman of Alaska, with the goal of one day establishing the monastery on Spruce Island that Saint Herman had prophesied. Together they began living for the ideal that the monk of Valaam Monastery had brought to America so long ago. They began living for the mission of Orthodox Truth.

Since the two friends lived in the San Francisco area they had as their spiritual father the Holy Archbishop John. It was with his prayers and blessing that the two friends began their missionary brotherhood. Together they opened a bookstore and began translating ancient spiritual texts that had never before been in English. They acquired an old hand-operated printing press and began the printing of these spiritually powerful texts. They drew their inspiration to continue their selfless work from the lives of the saints such as Saint Anthony of Egypt, Saint Paisius, Xenia, and even the contemporary Saint Archbishop John.

Archbishop John, before his death, said a cryptic statement, that in California there would be a missionary monastery. His words proved prophetic.

Sick to death of the city and the world, the two friends bought some land in the wilderness of northern California near the town of Platina, and moved their printing operation there. They began to live like the desert dwellers of ancient times.



This icon of Christ from Valaam Monastery was passed on to the Brotherhood from Elder Michael for the tonsure of monks.

YOUTH OF THE APOCALYPSE

There was no running water, no telephone, and no electric lines. They built the buildings themselves and lived with bears, bats, and rattlesnakes.

In 1970 the two friends became monks, thus dying forever to the world. As a monk in the wilderness, Seraphim's spirit began to soar. Monk Seraphim once wrote:

The city is for those who are empty, and it pushes away those who are filled. The desert keeps those who are filled and allows them to thrive.

In the wilderness, far away from the tumult of the world, the two friends were united in soul, sacrificing themselves for the ideal—that ancient, apostolic and otherworldly Christianity would be made available to America. Thus, an Orthodox missionary monastery was established in fulfillment of the prophecy of Archbishop John

Working by candlelight in his tiny cabin, Monk Seraphim wrote many books on the spiritual state of the modern world and translated ancient texts on spiritual life into English. In countries at that time behind the Iron Curtain, his writings on the state of modern man, the meaning of suffering, and the soul after death had an incalculable impact on millions of lives. During the Communist era, his writings were secretly translated, hand-typed, and distributed in the underground press. You could be killed for just possessing one of these manuscripts, let alone reading them and living them.

Monk Seraphim's message of underground Christianity, of suffering and persecution in this world for the sake of truth, touched a deep chord in the people who were being crucified by the atheistic state. But his message doesn't apply just to them, but gives a devastating blow to those who are satisfied with the world and its institutions.

The following is an account by a college student who met Seraphim Rose on his campus in 1982. Soon after meeting Father Seraphim he joined his brotherhood and became a monk.



Priest-monks Seraphim and Herman at their monastery in the wilderness of California.

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I met Father Seraphim a year and a half before his death. Like him I had been seeking reality through Eastern religions but was reduced to despair. Then one day Father Seraphim came to the college campus where I was studying. He drove up in an old beat-up pickup truck, and emerged with his worn-out black robe, his long hair and his exceedingly long gray dreaded beard. I found out later that he hadn't taken a shower since the day he became a monk. He was an image of total poverty.

The next thing I remember is walking with Father Seraphim through the college. Everyone was staring at him, but he walked through as naturally as if he had been at home. In the middle of this progressive college, he seemed like someone who had just stepped out of the fourth-century desert.

Father Seraphim went to a lecture room and delivered a talk called "Signs of the coming of the end of the world." I could see that he was at least as learned and far more wise than any of my professors, and yet he was clearly a man of the wilderness. It was only later that I had found out that he was at one time a teacher of Chinese at U. C. Berkeley.

What struck me most about Father Seraphim was that he was a man sacrificing himself totally for God. He was not a university professor that made lots of money, nor was he a religious leader that sought after power. He was just a simple monk who desired the truth above all else. I know that he would die for the truth, for he was dying for it already.⁸⁰

In the midst of writing and translating books Father Seraphim all of a sudden got sick unto death. One evening, after a day of great difficulties, Father Herman went to Father Seraphim. He was sitting down and looked up at his friend. Father Herman began to pour out his heart about how they were killing themselves to spread Orthodoxy and nobody seemed to care. Father Herman complained, "I have no one to help me," and seeing Father Seraphim's sickly state said, "and I don't even have you...." Father Seraphim lifted his head and whispered: "You'll have me in Paradise."

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In 1982 Father Seraphim approached his death. His time was at hand. As he lay in a hospital bed in agony, Father Herman asked for his blessing and consent to establish a monastery on Saint Herman's Island in Alaska, their lifetime goal. Father Seraphim said in painful joy, "May God bless it," and soon after died, leaving his friend alone. Monk Seraphim's lifetime search for Truth that began in suffering, ended in Heaven which proved to be the beginning of eternal life.



Priest-monk Nestor the new martyr.

PRIEST-MONK NESTOR

In 1960, Nestor Savchuk was born in the province of Crimea in southern Russia. He was never close to his family but was always distant from them. As he grew into a young man, he began to channel all his energy into wrestling, boxing, and the martial arts. He possessed a keen awareness and stood out above his peers.

Nestor also had an artistic side, being a talented painter. In his early twenties he traveled to Odessa to work as an apprentice painting religious murals. In Odessa he became friends with the older artists, who began to inspire him with stories of righteous men and women who had glorified God through their courageous labors in the monasteries of Russia over the last 1,000 years. It was the early 1980's, Russia was Communist, and the ancient Orthodox Christian faith had been all but forgotten by the Russian people. Suddenly a spark was kindled in Nestor's heart. He began to burn with a desire to flee the vanity of the world and tap into his ancient Christian roots.

Making the resolve to give his life wholly to God, Nestor left Odessa for the ancient 13th-century Pochaev Monastery. Here Nestor began laboring in dedication of heart as a monk. As providence would have it, Nestor discovered that he had two long-lost great-uncles who served at the monastery. One was a married priest who lived with his family in the town, and the other was a greatly revered old monk who had been known for his righteous life.

At that time, the monasteries in communist Russia were regulated by the government. All the monks were required to be registered with the state which was atheist. Nestor, being against atheism never registered. In the mid-1980's the government began to persecute the monastery—some monks were taken to prison-camps, while others simply “disappeared.”

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Because he was not registered with the state, Nestor knew he would be put in prison or killed if he were found by the government officials. And so Nestor continued on struggling in the war-like conditions, living in hiding as an “illegal” monk. Nestor, having a strong and brave soul was soon ordained a priest-monk at an extremely young age.

Eventually the conditions at Pochaev Monastery became so severe that most of the monks had either left, been taken away to prison-camps, or killed. Not knowing what to do, Nestor turned to his spiritual father, the elder John Kristi-ankin, who told him to go to the isolated village of Zharky. Following his advice as divine guidance, Nestor headed out across the great expanse of Russia’s countryside.

After a long journey Nestor arrived in the little village of Zharky. Because it was surrounded by vast wilderness and the roads were flooded in winter, Zharky was accessible only during the summer months. Few believers remained in the village. Upon arriving at this desolate village in the Russian wilderness, Nestor went straight to the church where he would be serving. It was old and run-down, but had many ancient icons. Nestor’s original inspiration had come from religious images and latter he died for these ancient images (icons) of Christ and the saints. Ever since he became a monk his heart burned for Christ and the other world they represented. Nestor looked at icons and images of Christ in a unique way. He didn’t see wood and paint, but rather his heart was transformed and he felt the eternal Kingdom of God within himself. To understand the image (icon) of Christ is to understand the incarnation of God.

At one time, two righteous fools-for-Christ’s sake had been martyred at this church. Before they were murdered they prophesied saying that, “The priest who shall serve here until the end will be saved.” Not aware of the prophecy but sensing a mystical air about the old church, Nestor immediately said that he loved the place with all his heart and wanted to stay there the rest of his life.

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As is the lot of those who pursue righteousness, suffering awaited Nestor. The police warned him of an icon-stealing ring run by the Russian Mafia—gangsters from Odessa who would steal icons from rural churches and sell them on the black market for big money. Nearly all the churches in the area had been burglarized.

Other difficulties came from local hooligans who hassled him because he was a priest. One day, Nestor tucked in his long hair and beard as was his custom when traveling, so as to keep a low profile, and headed out for the bus stop with some important documents. At the bus stop, three drunken youths approached him and began to harass him. “Show me your cross,” they taunted him, and began grabbing under his jacket to get at his cross. So as not to allow them to defile his cross, Nestor was forced to deflect their hands. Not knowing that Nestor was skilled in martial arts, the youths tried to attack him. But he dodged their punches, making the fight look more like a dance. Suddenly, remembering that his documents were unguarded, Nestor hesitated; at that moment he was hit by a blow in the eye. Soon the police arrived, but Nestor told them to let the youths go. He hadn’t forgotten that he too had once been a rebellious youth. A month later the youth who had punched Nestor in the eye came to his house to say he was sorry. After talking to him for a while the young Andrew decided to join forces with him, moved into his house, and began to follow his strict way of life.

With his youthful zeal he had brought life to the desolate village of Zharky. Nestor also traveled to several other churches in the surrounding region, helping all in need, Christian or non-Christian. To the Russian people, the young Nestor was a reminder of their ancient Christian roots.

In addition to his selfless work for others, Nestor maintained an austere life of prayer. After traveling to visit his spiritual children in other villages, Nestor would walk home at night. He didn’t like to travel in cars; these late-night walks were the only time he had to himself. Even through the winter



Priest-monk Nestor serving before God.

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snow, he would walk as far as twelve miles to get home. This was his time to be alone with God; he would immerse himself in prayer, losing track of time. Nestor would return home to complete his rigorous prayer rule, which consisted of hours of singing ancient chant, and kneeling in prayer with tears.

In time, Nestor traveled to the war zone of Abkhazia, Georgia (a small country bordering southern Russia, formerly part of the Soviet Union) in order to help the suffering people there and to spread the light and truth of Christ. He began to thrive in the warlike conditions, and the ultimate sacrifice a Christian can give was born in him—the desire to be martyred for faith in Christ. Knowing that death was imminent in the hostile land of Abkhazia, Nestor felt drawn to stay. His spiritual father back in Russia, however, guided him back to the village of Zharky by saying to him, “Would a mother abandon her own children to raise another’s children?” Nestor realized that he had to return to his own spiritual children.

Upon returning to Russia, Nestor met with more hardship and even persecution. The church was robbed several times, caught fire once, and Nestor even suffered a backlash of envy and strife from his own people. He once told a friend that it was the ones he gave the most to, who troubled him the most.

In 1993 three monks were murdered at the famous Optina Monastery in central Russia. In the 19th century, Optina was the spiritual capital of Orthodox Russia, renowned for its lineage of Eldership which had come down from Saint Paisius Velichkovsky. Crowds of people including the authors Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and others had flocked to Optina Monastery for spiritual guidance from the great Elders. The three monks were stabbed to death on Easter night, during the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection. The autopsy showed what seemed to be a ritualistic killing—each had had his throat slit, and the stab wounds were in a specific pattern. A blood-stained dagger was found on the monastery grounds with the numbers 666 inscribed on the blade. Later, a man confessed to the murders and admitted that the killings were a ritual of a satanic

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cult and that he had deliberately killed the three best monks in the monastery.

Nestor often spoke of the Optina martyrs with great reverence, and it became evident that he longed to follow them. He longed for a martyr's crown himself. Once a friend tried to counsel him that it was better to be longsuffering and endure the tedious trials of life. To this Nestor replied, "You know, my friend, I have such a fiery desire to receive a martyr's crown because I led a loose life as a youth and lived only for myself. How can I repay God for what He has given me?" The friend pleaded with him, "It's too daring to desire martyrdom; you must suffer for a long time." Nestor again replied, "Yes, I understand that, but maybe if I will pray for martyrdom—perhaps I will be able to pray it out."

Truly Nestor was now ablaze with that fire of faith that burns for the other world. He saw death not as an end of life but as a beginning. His faith was deep—to the extent that he had begun to pray for suffering and even death not as an escape from this world, but in order to be mystically crucified with Christ.

Again the church was robbed. This time Nestor had had enough—his poor church was being extorted. He had to do something. Quickly, he spotted a tire track in the snow leading to a dirt road in the woods, and began to follow it. In the distance was a parked car. To conceal the fact that he was a monk, Nestor took off his monk's cap, pulled up his robe, and approached the car staggering and yelling as if he were drunk. Inside the car sat a gangster who immediately jumped out of the car and attacked him. Once again Nestor's experience in the martial arts came to his aid, as he was able to deflect the gangster's punches and so buy enough time to get the license plate number of the vehicle. The police eventually caught the gangsters and returned the icons to the church. Word came to Nestor that if he pressed charges, the Mafia would hunt him down. His closest friends pleaded with him not to do it. Nestor met with the gangster who had attacked him, and asked him

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why he had done it. The gangster replied; "Money." And Nestor asked him if he regretted stealing from the church. But he answered without a drop of remorse, "I have no regret whatsoever." Nestor knew he had to make a stand. If he let the Mafia intimidate him his poor church would suffer. To one who tried to talk him out of it, Nestor explained, "If these were my personal enemies, I could forgive them; but these men are enemies of the simple believers and of God. They have no remorse for the evil they have done. I cannot let them go."

Then began several attempts on Nestor's life which he narrowly escaped. The robberies of icons had become widespread—every church in the region had been burglarized at least once. Nestor began to guard the church at night. The Mafia was not just after the icons anymore—they wanted Nestor's life.

On one occasion Nestor heard a knock at the door. When he opened the door he was held at gunpoint. Not backing down, Nestor fearlessly looked straight into the eyes of the hoods, turned around, walked into his house, and locked the door. The hoods came after him, breaking in the window. Grabbing a flare gun, Nestor fired some shots to scare them off. But, knowing he was a monk and priest and so would not shoot them, they barged through the window. Nestor then ran into his room and locked the door, and as he was climbing out of the window he cut his arm and began to bleed. Quickly he bandaged his arm and then escaped. As he fled, blood dripped on the ground—the very ground on which he would later shed his life's blood.

Knowing that each day could be his last, Nestor began to double his missionary work. A close friend of his recalls, "To each he would give his all; they would flock to him. At times it was difficult. Sometimes he would lock himself in his room for two or three days to fast and pray. In this way he received strength to go on. In the last year I knew him, he became so deep...a simple depth that came from trust in God. He was not



Priest-monk Nestor in his coffin.

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afraid of anything. He was an unusual man who gave himself to the will of God. He was fearless.”

Nestor had broken through the wall that separates God and man, and God had become a living force in him. A close friend remembers one of his last conversations with Priest-monk Nestor: “We talked about the enemies of the church. He said to me, ‘Why should we be afraid?’ I said, ‘But those wicked thieves are everywhere!’ He spoke calmly, ‘To all is God’s will. To suffer for Christ—this is a great joy.’ He talked about the spiritual war going on in the world today.... He was already prepared for death.”

On December 31, 1993, Priest-Monk Nestor was found dead outside the window of his house, with his throat slit and with multiple stab wounds. The people believe that it was not a simple case of revenge, but was a strategic move in a spiritual war that is taking place today throughout the world. As the forces of darkness increase, the light becomes more visible. The life and death of Priest-Monk Nestor do not represent defeat, but the triumph of God’s righteousness. It is the height of the human experience—martyrdom for the truth. Hieromonk Nestor passed from this life at the age of thirty-three—the same age at which Jesus Christ was crucified.



In a world void of examples of righteousness these lovers of truth offer a heroic example of suffering for the truth. But their lives mean nothing unless they are embraced by us, and unless we imitate them. Clearly, the message of these righteous ones is one that this world is not the least bit interested in. Those who, like these lovers of truth, have felt themselves out of place in society, who have been devoured and spit forth by the uncomprehending world, can understand their radical call of the last true rebellion. The “respectable” ones do not hear Christ’s message that is not of this world—but the outcasts understand.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE LAST TRUE REBELLION

FROM the day that God became flesh and was crucified until now, *the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.*⁸¹ The answer to the question “Why?” has been revealed, and now we must take the heavens by force, in faith, hope, and love. Now it is time for the last true rebellion.

We are no longer children of war, because we now know the way, the truth, and the life; and thus, within our hearts the war of man against God has come to an end. The only violence that is left is the determination of our will to die for the truth. Now the unseen war begins. This is the life-long struggle against the passions and vices within. It is a war against sin, with the aim of acquiring virtue. This unseen war begins and ends with the last true rebellion.

Detachment from this world is the door to the freedom of this rebellion, while the key that unlocks the door is asceticism. Asceticism is the practice of achieving virtue by spiritual and physical labor: fasting, prayer, vigilance, silence and deprivations. The labor is in depriving oneself of this temporary world and its pleasures, in order to acquire the eternal peace of the other world—heaven. It is this rebellion against the world that begins on the battlefield of our own hearts and in our own souls and bodies that is the only source of true freedom.

To understand the last true rebellion, we have to have an understanding of: the body and the soul, the senses, the passions, the virtues, prayer, and suffering. We will begin with the aspects that comprise human existence.

*The Body and the Soul*⁸²

There are two aspects to human life—that of the body and that of the soul. Both of these work together according to the person's will. The body is the means by which the soul expresses itself, while the soul is the means by which the body has life. So the detachment from this world must be with the body and with the soul if it is to be successful.

The life of the body consists of various organs, each of which carries out its function, which is necessary for the body's life. There are three major systems: the digestive system, the musculoskeletal system, and the nervous system. When these function correctly in relation to each other, the body is healthy and life is not endangered; but when the order is upset, the body becomes ill and life is endangered. This rule also applies to the soul.

The life of the soul consists of three parts: *the mind, the will, and the heart or spirit*. *The mind* comprises the mental life, a person's thoughts. As soon as something is perceived with the senses, the imagination and memory begin to work. Nothing can enter the soul without the imagination and the memory. If something is not stored in the memory, you will never be able to imagine it, let alone think about it. Thoughts are never born directly from the soul. Thus, thought itself comes out of the soul and operates according to the laws of the soul.

The second part of the soul, *the will*, is the greatest gift that God has given us. With this gift of freedom of will, we make the vital decision to believe in God or believe in Nothing. Just as the body can die and decompose, so also the soul can decompose. This happens when the free will desires to reject God. It was in this total freedom that mankind's shackles were created and in these chains mankind still claims freedom. This is why freedom is a perfect, yet fearful, gift.

The third part of the soul, *the heart*, is the core of one's being. It is also called the spirit, or the highest aspect of the

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soul. It is no accident that the spirit has also been given the name of heart, for this physical organ is also the core of the body. The heart or the spirit, as a force which has come from God, knows God, seeks God, and in Him alone finds rest. With a certain innermost spiritual feeling attesting to its coming from God, the spirit feels its complete dependence on Him and acknowledges itself as obliged to please God in everything and live only for Him and by Him

More precise manifestations of these movements of the heart are: (1) *Fear of God*. All people, no matter what their degree of development, know that there is a supreme being, God, who created everything, and that they depend on Him for everything. Such is the natural belief which is inscribed in the heart. (2) *Conscience*. The contemporary opinion about the conscience is that it is an element implanted by society that needs to be destroyed. To say this is to say that we need to heartlessly kill our own soul, for the conscience is the voice of God within the heart that whispers to us what is right and wrong; what is pleasing to God, or displeasing. In these sorry times, through slavery, we've become insensitive to our conscience; we no longer hear clearly what is right or wrong. Thus our goal is to become more sensitive to our conscience. (3) *The longing for God*. This is expressed in the universal yearning for God. It is also seen in dissatisfaction with this world. What does this dissatisfaction signify? It signifies that nothing in the created world is capable of satisfying the heart. The heart or the spirit comes from God, it seeks God, it wants to taste God, it wants to abide and live in communion with God and to rest in God. When it has attained this, it has peace; and until it has attained it, it cannot have peace.

The Senses

The life of a human being is very complex, and at the same time very simple. The human being is the temple of God. By our free will we can desecrate this temple, or treasure it. The

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19th-century Russian Orthodox philosopher Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov revealed the mystery of the human temple with these words:

When the mind and heart become God's dwelling, then the soul and body also become His dwelling. But God's temple is corrupted and destroyed when the body falls into sensual lust and when the mind and heart enter into evil conversation.⁸³

The struggle in spiritual life against the desecration of this temple is revealed in the word "sensual," which signifies the senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. A 19th-century monk from Mount Athos, Greece, Saint Nicodemus, said:

Now although the body naturally inclines to the enjoyment of the senses, nevertheless it is led, ruled, and curbed by the mind.⁸⁴

And to continue the thought, a 9th-century monk of Palestine, Saint John Damascene, said:

This is the difference between a rational soul and the irrational. The irrational is led and ruled by the body and the senses, while the rational soul leads and rules the body and the senses. Your true self is not the visible body but the invisible soul.⁸⁵

Knowing all this, it is clear that the bodily senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—are the doors to the soul. When used improperly, these doors actually imprison the soul. Saint Ignatius says: "The eyes of the soul are the mind."⁸⁶ This proves the necessity of guarding both the senses and the mind.

In our times, this truth about the unseen part of life has not only become "obsolete," but is actually hated. By hating these principles of life, the world has descended to the shallowness of sensuality, and thus the soul of modern man has been desecrated and burned to the ground. But once we understand these



Saint John Damascene

principles, we must at least build up our own soul by guarding the senses, the mind, and the heart.

When we watch evil things with our eyes, we imprint this evil on our soul; when we listen to evil music, the sounds of evil are engraved on the soul and our thoughts and imagination give us no peace. The evil then leads to evil acts of destruction. In short, we destroy our body, our soul, and our heart.

The mystic, Saint John of Kronstadt, who died in this century, had an incredible understanding of the senses and

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their effect on the soul, for he himself had attained such a height of sensitivity that, by the power of God, he knew people's hearts and even thoughts. He said the following about the impression of music on the soul:

Do not be allured by the melodious sounds of an instrument or of a voice; but by their effect upon the soul, or by the words of the song, consider what their spirit is. If the sounds produce upon your soul tranquil, chaste, holy feelings, then listen to them and feed your soul with them. But if they give rise in your soul to passions, don't listen to them, and throw aside both the flesh and the spirit of the music.⁸⁷

This is the essence of the unseen war; guarding the purity of the heart. In guarding the purity of the heart, you are thereby guarding the place where God abides. The 19th-century ascetic, Theophan the Recluse, summarized this struggle in these words:

There is only one way to begin: and that is by taming the passions. These cannot be brought under control in the soul except by guarding the heart and by awareness. Therefore, when the heart is cleansed from passions, one can devote all time to prayer, and fighting against the thoughts; and then one can look towards heaven with their physical eyes or contemplate it with the spiritual eyes of the soul, praying in purity and in truth.⁸⁸

The Passions

Just as chains hinder a prisoner's freedom, so also the passions hinder the lover of truth from conversing with God. To speak of passions today is not an easy thing, since passion and vice has been given the name of virtue, and virtue has been given the name of vice.

The word passion comes from the Latin word *passionis*, which means suffering. In contemporary use, the word has taken on the meaning of romantic love, as *passion* also means

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an intense, overpowering emotion. Nevertheless, its true meaning is suffering. The suffering of passion is the suffering that this fallen world provides through its intense overpowering emotion for vice. In short, we suffer because of sin, and thus we are not free. In order to understand passion and dispassion, one must understand slavery and freedom, in both the seen and unseen sense. When we become a victim of passion, we become a slave of our own flesh and a slave to this world. But when we are dispassionate, there are no limits to our freedom, both in this world, and within our own heart. The spirit of God is the spirit of freedom. This is true freedom and true peace, that the world can neither give nor understand. Thus, if God is truth, then, when *you shall know the truth, the truth shall make you free*.⁸⁹ The answer and key to life rests in the freedom to see, know, and love God.

“What a man loves, that he certainly desires; and what he desires, that he strives to obtain,” said the 4th-century monk and mystic, Abba Evagrius. This is the first principle to be grasped if one wishes to understand and conquer the passions and vices. One can desire and love God, or one can desire and love that which fights against God. The urgency for this unseen warfare with our passions and vices is very clear, for we’ve narrowed it down to two choices: we must either choose passion or dispassion, slavery or freedom, God or this world.

There are eight principal passions, born in this order: gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, despondency, despair, vainglory, and pride. These are the basic passions that give birth to the innumerable vices and sins that rule this world. These eight passions are like links in a chain that lead to the pit of slavery. In general, each passion, when surrendered to, gives birth to the next, and so on down the chain. They are interconnected though in no fixed pattern, for every soul reacts to the passions differently.

Passion originates and finds its initial movement in a thought, and has a succession of six movements in its development, until it reaches its end result: slavery to vice. But

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before the origin of the thought of the passion, there first takes place one vital thing: weakness of faith.⁹⁰ After one's faith weakens, the following six states begin the process of imprisoning the soul:⁹¹

(1) *Suggestion* is a simple thought which comes to the mind from outside, that suggests the idea of vice. There are two causes for the occurrence of the initial suggestion: one being a natural cause and the other being caused by the inspiration of the evil one, and evil spirits. Suggestion takes place independently of one's free will, against one's wish, without one's participation—spontaneously—and is therefore considered innocent or dispassionate. If it is not invited consciously and voluntarily, it is not yet a vice.

(2) *Conjunction* is the most important stage because it is voluntary conversation with the evil thought, granting it permission to come within, receiving it and holding it within the mind. Attention lingers with the thought and delights in it. In order to cut off the further development of the vice, to remove it from the mind and to terminate the evil fantasy, one needs to gather one's attention by the effort of one's free will.

(3) *Joining* is the acceptance of the thought, and is thus a defeat by it. It is the absence of willful rejection of the thought, through which the will becomes increasingly attracted to the vice and its evil mental images, and gets satisfaction from it. The equilibrium of the soul is totally destroyed, and the soul surrenders to the thought and is no longer free. The vice has been committed in intention, yet it has still not become an act.

(4) *Struggle* is opposition to the vice before it becomes totally manifest as an act. In many cases this stage is absent from the progression of the passion, especially when one is used to surrendering to the evil thoughts and images, and have the habit of sin engraved into the soul.

(5) *Captivity* is passion; it is imprisonment and enslavement to the vice. It is no longer the will that rules over the evil thought, but the evil thought rules over the will, putting all its energy and attention on the passion. Thus, the passion and vice

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become the object of affection and love, and this evil love becomes habitual. The passion becomes the daily reason for existing, and love for God and mankind becomes the object of secret hatred. The prison of the vice becomes cold and dark, and the decomposition of the soul sets in.

A person must not allow this to take place, but must learn to struggle against the passions in the most difficult of warfare, that is compared to the bearing of a cross. Saint Isaac, a Syrian desert-dweller of the 7th century, said:

This cross-bearing is of two kinds: one consists of enduring the bodily deprivations which are inevitable in struggling with passions. The other consists in meditation on God, and abiding in prayer, and is called contemplation. The first, bodily cross-bearing, purifies the passionate part of the soul, while the second, contemplation, brings light to the soul.⁹²

The Virtues

The person enabled by grace to devote himself utterly and always to God has achieved the highest good. But on the path to this good there are the many and innumerable virtues. The greatest of these virtues were summed up in the teachings of the Apostle and disciple of Christ named Paul. Calling them the “fruits of the Spirit,” he said that they are: *Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-restraint*.⁹³

The word *virtue* comes from the Latin word *virtus* which has a twofold meaning: first, *power*, and second, its common English meaning. That is why good is always victorious over evil—because the greatest power is virtue. The 5th-century Syrian monk, Saint Isaac, said of virtue:

The fear of God is the beginning of virtue and it is said to be the offspring of faith. It is planted in the heart when a man withdraws his mind from the world’s distractions so as



Saint Isaac the Syrian

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to confine its wandering thoughts within the reflections upon the world to come.

The virtues follow one another in succession, so that the path of virtue does not become grievous and burdensome, and so that being achieved in order progressively they may be made light; thus, the hardships endured for virtue's sake should be cherished by a man as is the virtue itself.⁹⁴

Although there are many virtues, there are four principle virtues that are directly of the soul. An 11th-century monk of the desert in Asia Minor, Saint Peter Damascene, wrote about these four virtues:

There are four forms of the wisdom of virtue: First—*moral judgment*, or the knowledge of what should and shouldn't be done, combined with the guarding of the mind; second—*self-restraint*, whereby our moral purpose is protected and kept free from all acts, thoughts, and words that do not accord with God; third—*courage*, strength, and endurance of suffering, trials and temptations encountered on the spiritual path; fourth—*justice*, which consists in maintaining a proper balance between the first three.

These virtues arise from the three aspects or powers of the soul in the following manner: From the soul's mind comes the virtue of moral judgment and justice; from the soul's will-power comes self-restraint; and from the soul's heart comes courage.⁹⁵

It is this courage of the heart that one needs in order to be victorious in virtue. C. S. Lewis said that without courage, no other virtue can exist except by accident. Without courage in striving for virtue one does not only deprive oneself of virtue but will inevitably be forced to embrace vice for, since virtue seems difficult to acquire, courage is of absolute necessity. The 14th century monk of Mount Athos, Greece, Gregory Palamas said concerning this:

Is good more difficult to accomplish, and virtues harder to achieve than evil things? I don't see things this way! It is a

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fact that the man who is drunk and has no self control labors harder than he who is master of himself.⁹⁶

After one has begun to master oneself, then one obtains the pinnacle of virtues: the source of the power of virtue, which is love. To speak of love is to dare to speak of God; for God is love. In the words of Saint Isaac of Syria:

Now that we have written above about spiritual aspiration and longing, the time has come to explain it. It is an indistinct power which is stirred in the heart by love.

The love of God is warm by nature, and when beyond nature it descends upon a man, it throws his soul into ecstasy.

This question was asked of Monk Isaac: "What is the perfection of all the fruits of the Spirit?" Isaac answered:

When a man is deemed worthy of the perfect love of God.

This question was then asked: "And when does a man know that he has attained this?" Isaac answered:

When the remembrance of God is stirred in his mind, straightway his heart is kindled by love of Him and his eyes pour forth abundant tears. A man who is in this state will never be without tears, because that which brings him to the remembrance of God is never absent from him. Wherefore, even in sleep he converses with God. For love desires it to be this way. This is perfection...even in this life.

He who has acquired love, tastes Christ every day and every hour, and becomes immortal through it. Love is much sweeter than life. He who has acquired love becomes clothed in God Himself.⁹⁷

Prayer

Thus from love we are led to prayer. The great monk of Mount Athos, Saint Gregory Palamas, said the following of prayer, which reveals the depths of prayer of the heart.



Theophan the Recluse

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The virtue of prayer performs the mystery of our union with God; it is the tie of rational creatures with their Creator.

There are three degrees of prayer that are like three links in a chain. Each degree leads to the other, until the one praying reaches the desired perfection of prayer. Very few people actually endure unto perfection in prayer. In fact, in these distracting times, very few people get past the first link in the progression of prayer.

Before prayer comes faith. We must understand that prayer is a real conversation with God, where, after the heart is purified, God comes to dwell within the heart. That is why the body is called a temple, for it is the house of God. This is why Christ said, *the kingdom of God is within you*.⁹⁸ This is where heaven begins for those who desire heaven. Thus prayer, true prayer, demands a faith that is not of this world.

On the three degrees of prayer, Saint Theophan the Recluse says:

The first degree is bodily prayer, which consists of reading written prayers and psalms. In this there must be patience, labor, and sweat; for the attention in prayer runs away. The heart then begins to feel nothing and then loses the desire to pray. Yet, in spite of this, give yourself a prayer rule and keep to it. Such is active prayer.

The second degree is prayer with attention: the mind becomes accustomed to attention at the time of prayer, and prays consciously, without distraction. The mind is focused on the written words to the point of speaking them as if they were its own.

The third degree is prayer of feeling: the heart is warmed by concentration so that what was only thought becomes feeling. First it was a virtuous phrase being read, then it becomes virtue itself, and what was only a petition in words is changed into a feeling of entire necessity. Whoever has passed through the first degree—action; and the second degree—thought; and has come to true feeling, will pray without words, for God is God of the heart.

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Turn to God, drawing down the attention of the mind into the heart, and call upon Him there. With the mind firmly established in the heart, stand before God with awe, reverence, and devotion. If we would fulfill this small rule unflinchingly, the passionate desires and feelings would never arise, nor would any other thought.⁹⁹

The entire meaning of human existence is summed up in prayer. It is the beginning and the end of life and the first goal strived for every passing day in life. Theophan the Recluse says:

The principle thing in life is to stand with the mind in the heart before God, and to go on standing before Him unceasingly, day and night, until the end of life.

Prayer is the only way to perfection but prayer in this corrupt and imperfect world comes only from Pain of heart.

Pain of Heart

If there is one common element that binds humanity together, it is suffering. People of all races, classes, and nations suffer. Simply, to suffer is to be human.

The tyranny of the Nihilist world causes humanity to suffer. In man's rebellion he inflicts pain upon himself, causing even more suffering. But perhaps the worst suffering is the suffering of ignorance, which causes man to follow the empty pleasures of the world. The question is: how does man escape suffering?

The answer is: man cannot escape suffering in this world. The crucified Christ teaches that man must embrace suffering and through it pass into the eternal life that is void of suffering. And this suffering must be for the truth of God. If we suffer for ourselves, we suffer in vain, but if we suffer for God we suffer for the truth.

But God is the fount of mercy, and it is by His wisdom that man cannot escape suffering in this world. Suffering is one of the greatest teachers. Monk Seraphim Rose, a man who was a

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true philosopher and knew and understood the gift of suffering, once said,

Why do men learn through pain and suffering, and not through pleasure and happiness? Very simply, because pleasure and happiness accustom one to satisfaction with the things given in this world, whereas pain and suffering drive one to seek a more profound happiness beyond the limitations of this world.

It is precisely when a person is suffering for seemingly no reason that God reveals Himself. It was for the oppressed and down-trodden that Christ came to earth. Christ came to deliver the race of mankind from spiritual bondage, to set the captives free. Suffering can be even a direct route by which God touches the heart. As one who had himself suffered intensely, Monk Seraphim Rose speaks from personal experience:

The process of revelation occurs in a very simple way: a person is in need, he suffers, and then the other world opens up. The more you are in suffering and difficulties and are desperate for God, the more He is going to come to your aid, reveal who He is, and show you the way out.

Once a person has accepted Christ in his heart, the burden of life's suffering becomes light. Suffering is then transformed into spiritual food by which virtue is gained.

The first virtue that suffering teaches is humility. Those who have suffered intensely know that human strength alone is not enough to endure the pain of life. It is only by the strength of God that they can endure it, whether it comes from an external source: sickness, bodily injury, or even torture; or from internal strife: loneliness, despair, sorrow, abandonment and grief. God teaches humanity through suffering to reveal human weakness so that we will seek the power of Christ.

The next virtue that suffering produces is patience. Through enduring the pain and trials of life strength of soul is gained. Along with longsuffering patience, comes the ability to

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see beyond the temporal world with its difficulties and to see the “big picture.” Wisdom tells the sufferer to look to things eternal, where there is no sickness, sorrow, or sighing. By holding eternity in the heart, the sufferer can endure temporal discomfort and feel thankful toward God for giving him the opportunity to bear a cross. Through enduring suffering with patience, the soul is tempered and man is given the chance to become real and grow in faith.

The third virtue learned through suffering is compassion. Only one who has suffered can have compassion for another who suffers. This virtue can grow to such a point that a person can literally feel another’s pain, and even the pain of all humanity, crying out in its lamentable state. Saint Isaac of Syria when speaking of compassion said:

And what is a heart of mercy? The kindling of the heart for all creation, for men, birds, animals, demons, and all creatures. In bringing them to mind, in beholding them the eyes are filled with tears out of a great and powerful compassion that embraces the heart. And the heart softens, and it cannot bear to hear or see any kind of harm, or even the least sorrow, experienced by a creature. And therefore even for those who cause one harm, it offers prayer every hour, that they may be preserved and purified. It is awakened in the heart without measure insofar as one becomes like God.

From these three virtues that are attained through “bearing the cross” of Christ, comes a state of soul called “pain of heart.” Pain of heart is a spring from which the sufferer draws, that pushes him on to endure all, to pass through death and meet the eternal realm. The foundation of pain of heart is the remembrance of death, the transitory nature of life on earth, and the suffering state of man on earth. These thoughts immediately bring the sufferer to the remembrance of God. The great monk of 4th century Palestine, Saint Mark the Ascetic, once said a simple phrase that captured in its fullness, pain of heart:



Weeping icon of Jesus Christ.

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Remembrance of God is pain of heart endured in the spirit of devotion. But he who forgets God becomes self-indulgent and thus insensitive.

It is this remembrance of God that finalizes the last true rebellion. The bearing of the cross in the spirit of devotion is the path by which the soul of man is purified and prepared to pass through bodily death into eternal life.

The Three Enemies

Now after forming a world view with an understanding of the body and soul, the senses, the passions, the virtues, prayer, and suffering, the last true rebellion can be revealed in its entirety. The monk, Saint Paisius, in his writings narrowed this rebellion down to three elements: *the world, the flesh, and the devil*. It is the rebellion against these that is the last true rebellion:

The World. The first degree of warfare and battle is against the world. This is when we separate ourselves from it and leave its sweet pleasures and the delusive mirage of its beauties of corruptible wealth, of temporary looseness; and take up the example of the voluntary poverty of Christ. *If anyone wishes to become a friend of the world, he becomes an enemy of God.*¹⁰⁰ Therefore flee from this world to a life of stillness. Deny the world with its delusion; estrange yourself from it with an estrangement that never turns back. And thus you will have conquered the first enemy.

The Flesh. You will conquer the body if you restrain yourself from an excess of pleasurable food and uncontrolled drinking. Then by fasting you will slay the desire for sin and mortify the lustful desires of the flesh; laziness you will destroy with wakefulness; the desire for impure sexual relations by the self-restraint of purity. It is with these arrows that the body wages war against the soul.

Our very body is partially an enemy for us, because with its desire for sin it battles against the soul. But it is also our

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friend, in that it can assist the soul in what is good. With the body, with God's help, I can fast, pour out tears, and give alms. We cannot do these things with the naked soul.

If we look to this world below, just to the body, then man is temporary, mortal, the inheritor of fire and darkness. But if we look with the mind's eye to the world above, then we are eternal, immortal, and the heir of heavenly light. Wherefore, I beg you as servants of Christ, that you be not captives to the world below, of the body and death, but live for the world above, for immortality.

The Devil. If you overcome the world and the flesh, then you can easily take arms against the devil himself, against the rulers of the world, the prince of darkness. Only take up the full armor of God with the weaponry of faith, patience, and prayer. The devil and his powers are thus overcome: pride by humility, vainglory by self-denial, sex by purity; but most of all by the cross of your patience, crucifying yourself to the world and thus dying to sinful life.

Then your victory will appear like the full moon in the daytime, shining with eternal glory; the angels of God will come to meet you and Christ the eternal King of glory will receive you and glorify you, granting you a place in His heavenly kingdom.¹⁰¹

Final Word

In this shattered world which is coming to an end, it is now so very clear. As the war of man against God continues, it has ceased with us. We are no longer children of war who cry ourselves to sleep over the death of God. We are no longer children of darkness but are the children of the light for we know our origin, we have lived through our death and have been resurrected.

We now know the difference between deformity and beauty, evil and good, hate and love—and to speak of love is to dare to speak of God for God is love. Thus, God is not dead, for who could kill love? It is this love that is worth dying for

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daily—it is God that is worthy of our ultimate sacrifice for God first died for us.

We have survived the hell of this dying world and now know that *the kingdom of Heaven is within* us. As the world continues in death, we will carry the cross of life for we see clearly the hell around us, but choose to be crucified personally—mystically; for crucifixion is the only way to resurrection.

In this resurrection Christ thrashed the gates of hell and unshackled those who were in its chains. He trampled down death by death, and gives life to those in the grave. All this with the power of God, leaving us with these simple instructions for the last true rebellion:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.¹⁰²

With these truths the youth of the apocalypse can rise above the darkness of the end and become the light of the world.

But as for now there abides faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

NOTES

¹ *Will to Power*, Vol. I, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, New York, Macmillan Co., 1909, Vol. 14, p. 6.

² Ibid.

³ The French Revolution.

⁴ Eugene Rose, *Nihilism*, St. Herman Brotherhood Press, Platina, CA, 1994, p. 92.

⁵ Paul Lafarne, *Socialism and Intellectuals*.

⁶ Richard Wurmbrandt, *Marx and Satan*, Crossway Books, Westchester, p. 85.

⁷ Mussolini was given a copy of Nietzsche's works by Hitler.

⁸ Quote of John Lennon.

⁹ Ravi Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism*, Baker Book House Co., Grand Rapids, 1990, pp. 22, 23.

¹⁰ Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, tr. by David Magarshack, Penguin Books, New York, 1984, p. 764.

¹¹ Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov.

¹² Yuri Annenkov, Soviet architect.

¹³ Nietzsche, *The Madman*.

¹⁴ Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*.

¹⁵ Richard Wurmbrand, *Marx and Satan*, p.107.

¹⁶ Account given by C. Ivy

¹⁷ In many educational systems Nietzsches' works are mandatory reading.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, *will to power*, p.92.

¹⁹ Eugene Rose, *Nihilism*, St. Herman Brotherhood Press, 1994, p. 97.

²⁰ I John 2:18.

²¹ Matthew 24: 1-51.

²² Nietzsche, *Will to Power*.

²³ Eugene Rose, *Nihilism*.

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- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: Readers Companion*, Bantam Books 1992, p. 175.
- ²⁶ Though the variables may change, the principle does not.
- ²⁷ Lao Tzu, *The Way of Life*, Signet Classics, New York, 1955, p. 68.
- ²⁸ Saint John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1977, p. 235.
- ²⁹ Saint Athanasius the Great, *On the Incarnation*, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, p. 38.
- ³⁰ Isaiah 9: 6,7.
- ³¹ Psalm 49: 3.
- ³² Isaiah 7: 14.
- ³³ Matthew 3:11.
- ³⁴ Isaiah 40: 3, 5.
- ³⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Macmillan Company, New York, 1952.
- ³⁶ John 10:30
- ³⁷ Luke 4: 17-21.
- ³⁸ Luke 4: 32
- ³⁹ John 4:4-26.
- ⁴⁰ Matthew 11:27.
- ⁴¹ Matthew 16:16-17.
- ⁴² I John 5:20.
- ⁴³ The definition of the word Gospel is "good news."
- ⁴⁴ John 14: 6.
- ⁴⁵ John 1:3, 14.
- ⁴⁶ Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*.
- ⁴⁷ Luke 6:27.
- ⁴⁸ Matthew 10:34
- ⁴⁹ John 15:18
- ⁵⁰ Matthew 21:12
- ⁵¹ Matthew 6:25
- ⁵² Matthew 16:25
- ⁵³ John 18:33-37.
- ⁵⁴ I John 3:16.
- ⁵⁵ John 15:13

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- ⁵⁶ Matthew 28:18.
- ⁵⁷ John 5:24.
- ⁵⁸ Luke 24:36-53.
- ⁵⁹ Saint John Damascene, *Orthodox Faith*, Book 1, pg. 166-167.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., pg. 167.
- ⁶¹ Matthew 28:19.
- ⁶² Saint Gregory the Theologian, Homily 31, *On the Holy Spirit*, sections 31-33, Eerdman's Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol. VII, p. 328.
- ⁶³ Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Saint Herman Brotherhood Press, 1983, pp 73-102.
- ⁶⁴ Matthew 27:?.
- ⁶⁵ Saint Nikolai Velimirovich, *Prologue*, pg. 239.
- ⁶⁶ A term coined in 20th-century communism for Christians.
- ⁶⁷ John 15:18-19.
- ⁶⁸ Acts 4: 32.
- ⁶⁹ *The Martyrs of the Coliseum*. Tan Publishers, 1987.
- ⁷⁰ Ancient Syrian documents, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII,
- ⁷¹ Oyer, Father Michael, *St. Basil the Great and the Formation of Ascetic Communities*. St Paisius Abbey Press, Forestville, 1994.
- ⁷² The word *monk* comes from the Greek word *monos*, which means "single," "alone"—implying one who is alone with God.
- ⁷³ Matthew 19:21
- ⁷⁴ Matthew 26: 52.
- ⁷⁵ I Corinthians 4:10
- ⁷⁶ Skema-monk Metrophan, *Blessed Paisius*, Saint Herman Brotherhood Press, 1976, p.30.
- ⁷⁷ The Little Russian Philokalia Vol. II, Saint Herman Brotherhood Press, 1983. p. 34.
- ⁷⁸ An earthen dwelling made with beach wood and moss.
- ⁷⁹ *Blessed John the Wonderworker*, Saint Herman Brotherhood Press 1987 p. 128-9.
- ⁸⁰ This account was given to us from the author of Father Seraphim's biography, *Not of this World*, Father Damascene Christensen.
- ⁸¹ Matthew 11:12
- ⁸² From the teachings of Saint Theophan the Recluse.

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- ⁸³ Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov, *The Arena: An Offering to Contemporary Monasticism*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1983, p. 227.
- ⁸⁴ Constantine Cavarnos, *Modern Orthodox Saints*, Vol. III, Institute For Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Belmont, 1979, p. 118.
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- ⁸⁶ Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov, *The Arena*, p. 227.
- ⁸⁷ Saint John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*.
- ⁸⁸ *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart*, Faber and Faber, London, 1985, p. 200.
- ⁸⁹ John 8:32.
- ⁹⁰ Saint Paisius Velichkovsky.
- ⁹¹ The following is based on the collective teachings of the Holy Fathers throughout the centuries.
- ⁹² Saint Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetic Homilies*, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, 1984, p. 161.
- ⁹³ Galatians 5:22.
- ⁹⁴ Saint Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetic Homilies*, p. 207.
- ⁹⁵ *The Philokalia*, Vol. III, Faber and Faber, Winchester, 1986, p. 100.
- ⁹⁶ Saint Gregory Palamas, Homily fifteen, Greek Orthodox Theological Review, march, 34, 1989.
- ⁹⁷ Saint Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetic Homilies*, p. 344,345.
- ⁹⁸ Luke 17:21.
- ⁹⁹ *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, compiled by Ighemen Chariton of Valamo, tr. by E. Kadloubovsky and E. M. Palmer, Faber and Faber, London, 1985, pp. 51, 52.
- ¹⁰⁰ James 4:4.
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- ¹⁰² Matthew 5:3-11

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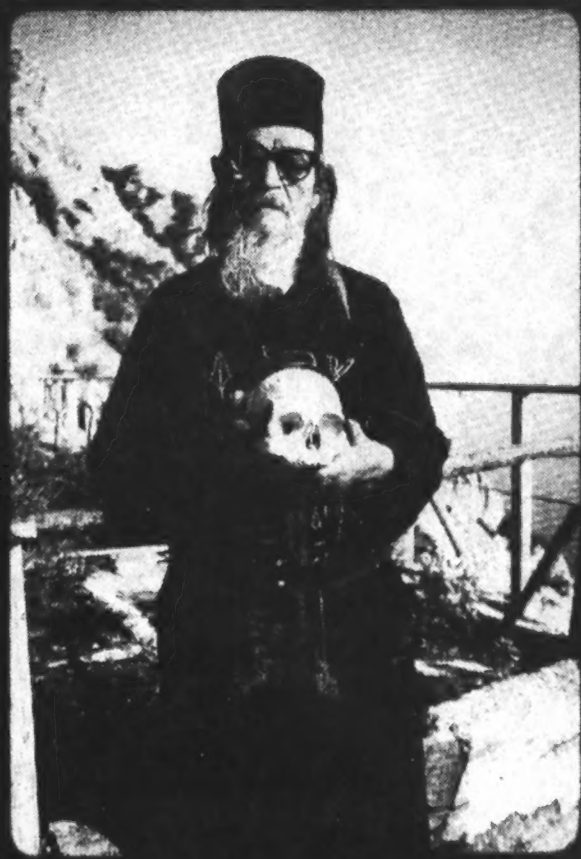
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1994

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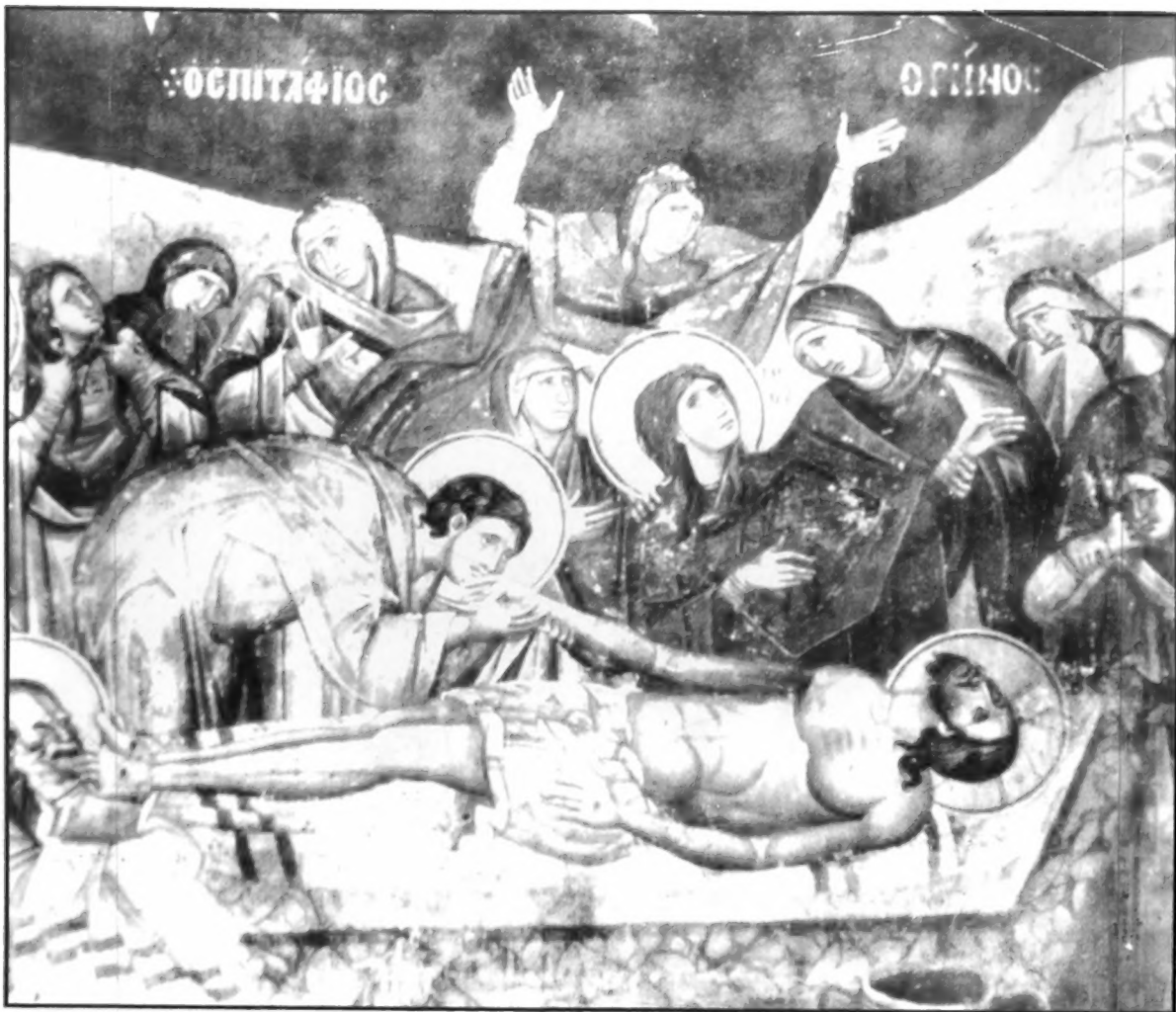
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WHAT do we mean by “DEATH TO THE WORLD”?

“*The world*” is the general name for all the passions. When we wish to call the passions by a common name, we call them the world. But when we wish to distinguish them by their special names, we call them passions. The passions are the following: love of riches, desire for possessions, bodily pleasure from which comes sexual passion, love of honor which gives rise to envy, lust for power, arrogance and pride of position, the craving to adorn oneself with luxurious clothes and vain ornaments, the itch for human glory which is a source of rancor and resentment, and physical fear. Where these passions cease to be active, there the world is dead.... Someone has said of the Saints that while alive they were dead; for though living in the flesh, they did not live for the flesh. See for which of these passions you are alive. Then you will know how far you are alive to the world, and how far you are dead to it.”

—St. Isaac the Syrian



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—Monk Seraphim

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